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Calvinist

Christmas 1985

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*O great mystery:
that God should become
man for us!*

Calvinist Contact

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Editorial

Some things belong in the inn, not the stable

In order to get into the mood of preparing for another Christmas issue long before most people care to think about it, I decided to pick up a few Christmas books at the local library. I must say, the selection of quality material in most libraries is not very great.

I spent a fair bit of time reading an anthology entitled *Christmas in Canada*. Of the 40 stories and poems, most dealt with the trappings of Christmas or "Yule-tide" — being snowbound, getting gifts and enjoying sumptuous meals. Only a few deserve mention.

His reason for giving

Accomplished Canadian writer Morley Callaghan contributed a short story entitled "The Bachelor's Dilemma." In it he describes the plight of a young executive who had won a 22 pound turkey at a raffle. Since he was a bachelor, he could not use the bird himself. He tried to give the bird to relatives or friends, only to find that all of them already had a bird. "There's something the matter with the world when you can't give a turkey to anyone who knows you," the young man concluded.

After having attended a Christmas dinner at his brother's place, he came home to an uncooked 22 pound turkey still lying on the kitchen table. In desperation he finally takes the bird to a church in one of Toronto's streets. An old man there said that he knew a hundred or more poor families that might like to have the bird. It's at this point that the bachelor realized that instead of looking for someone who would appreciate the turkey he had been looking for someone who would appreciate him.

There is a lesson here for all of us who are inclined to give presents on or around Christmas. Do we give presents to people who will appreciate the gift, or are we looking for people to appreciate us? Is our gift-giving just another way of fortifying our own network of relations, or does it fall in the category of pleasing others?

The practice of gift-giving around Christmas has been a matter of controversy in our circles. Some of us get around it by following the old-country tradition of exchanging gifts on St. Nicholas Eve, December 5. Others have "Canadianized" by moving it closer to Christmas although not to the actual day. Some have thrown all scruples to the wind and exchange gifts on Christmas morning.

The latter practice makes it very difficult to do justice to the call coming to us in the words of the hymn: "O come, let us adore Him." It's best not to clutter up the simple Christmas event of a child being born in Bethlehem with too many distractions. Even family gatherings and festive meals can get in the way, as can elaborate or numerous church services.

If there must be gift giving around Christmas, let's at least integrate the custom with the meaning of the birth of Christ. Let's give to those who need and appreciate the gift. That's what Christ did too. He did not come into the flesh to strengthen personal ties or feather his own bed. The manger hardly qualifies as a bed!

The poetry of the Babe

There was another story in the *Christmas in Canada* book that makes a point, which, no doubt, others have made, but the story makes it in a fresh way. A recent immigrant woman from Hungary (recent when she wrote the story in the 1950s) describes her first Christmas in Canada.

Nadine Hradsky and her two children went to Union Station in Toronto to admire the Christmas decorations. Her husband was still in Hungary and they could not afford to buy their own Christmas tree and decorations. What overwhelmed this lady

was the kindness of an elderly couple who, upon seeing one of the children cry, bought a few small presents for them and wished them a "Merry Christmas."

In later years, the Hungarian woman would recall "the marvel of our first Christmas Eve in Union Station," as she addressed various groups. But out of politeness she never mentioned the part of the Canadian Christmas that distressed her.

She writes in this story:

It seems to us that Canadians have changed the emphasis of Christmas from the birthday of Jesus to Santa Claus. The poetry of that little Babe in the manger is so beautiful I can't understand this It is a consolation for poor children to know that the Highest Spirit was also poor I can't see how Santa Claus can help you with your troubles when you grow up.

The language may be a little foreign to us Calvinists. We don't generally focus on the poetry of the birth of baby Jesus, although in practice we admire the esthetic dimension of Christmas as we sing the lullaby "Silent night, holy night ... sleep in heavenly peace." We even wax a little sentimental. Who? us, staunch Calvinists? Nevertheless, it takes an outside point of view like that of Nadine Hradsky to show where Canadian culture is losing the significance of Christmas.

Cutting through social engineering

Gregory Clark in a short article called "Social Engineering" humorously describes the evolution of Santa Claus. "Santa Claus originally was a secretive sort of fellow," he writes.

"Not only did nobody ever see him. You weren't even supposed to hear him. He came by stealth in the middle of the night. So intent on not being visualized was he that he came down chimneys instead of using doors or even windows. A more elusive and invisible character did not exist."

What has happened to this silent fellow? Somebody got the idea of dressing up as a Santa Claus in his own house and entertaining the children. The idea spread like wildfire. Santa Claus suits and beards went on sale everywhere. Stores caught on too. Today there are hundreds of Santa Clauses in every city.

"From a soundless wraith into the noisiest guy in history it stands as quite a feat of social engineering," says Gregory Clark.

What these three stories have in common is that they offer a pointed critique of the number our society has done on the birth of Jesus Christ. I'm not a purist who seeks to reduce the celebration of Christmas to listening to a sermon on Luke 2 and singing a few appropriate hymns. Commemorating the birth of Christ in the context of simple folk tradition and good fellowship can be an edifying way of saying "Joy to the World." But we have to cut through a lot of social engineering before we can find the right combination, it seems to me.

I hope my children will never "Canadianize" to the point of allowing Santa to become part of their Christmas. I hope they, along with many other Canadians, will adopt a simple way of celebrating a profoundly significant event in history.





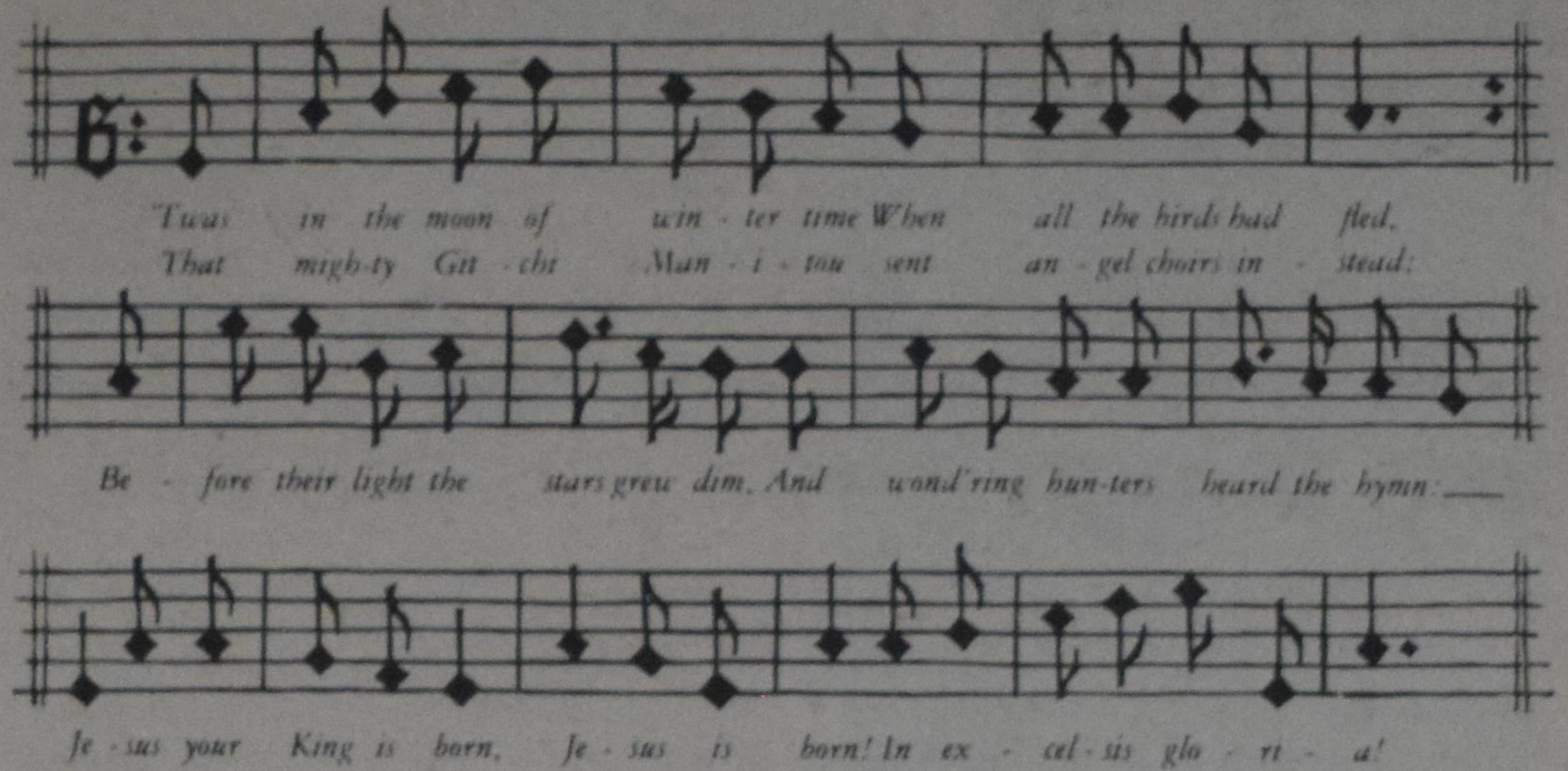
Huron Indian carol



The Huron carol, "Jesus Ahatonnia" ("Jesus is Born") is one of the few carols most people believe is indigenously Canadian.

It was written, however, by the French Missionary Father Jean de Brébeuf for the Huron Indians.

Like the missionaries among the European pagans, de Brébeuf described Christ's nativity to the Hurons in terms of their own customs.



All the people

Frank Sawyer

"Luke 2:10 "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people..."

Christmas cake

Here, at the actual on-the-spot annunciation of Christ's birth by the angel and choir, an important aspect of the good news is underlined right from the start: the joyful message is for "all the people."

I would submit that all too often — especially in our individualistic age — we forget the importance of this aromatic flavour poured into the Christmas cake of the Gospel. "All the people" makes the Christmas annunciation very special. It is as if you said while sipping coffee at your neighbour's: "This sure is lovely Christmas cake" — and she were to reply: "Yes — I poured in a shot of rum and let it age for awhile."

That's the special touch here: "all the people" is like rum in the Christmas cake.

The people

In our democratic era we sometimes speak of "the people" as if such a group existed. Politicians should listen to the people, we say; or "everybody" knows/agrees/thinks/is doing ... and then comes whatever-it-is your teenage son or daughter wishes to clinch with an appeal to peer pressure (but tied up in democratic wrapping with a couple of loops of persuasive ribbon).

Who are "the people?" The people actually belong to various parties, vocations, churches, ways of life ...

The GOOD NEWS must go to *all the people*: that is a piece of social criticism built right into the angelic annunciation to — note well — not the rulers of Israel, but to the shepherds.

Perhaps the going to the base, the grassroots movement in Latin America, for example, is more like the original intention of Christmas than anything most of us rather snowily-minded experience 'round the plastic-punk-like-Christmas-tree neon-starred culture (or cultus?) we have (commercially) evolved over the years.

Or: perhaps we should say rather loudly at yuletide: that the poor are always close at hand must say something about that hand. Like: it must become a *helping* hand all the way up into international politics. But starting with the hands we live by every day.

The phrase "all the people" in Luke 2 refers first of all to Israel. The Messiah must be announced to all. To shepherds, Pharisees, Zealots, fishermen, tax-collectors, the sick ... But we know, too, that *all the people* is an expression that points far beyond Israel. The eastern magi came to visit the Christ child as the first delegates from the Gentiles. The Gospel is for Jew and Greek, for *all the nations*. (Matt. 28:18-20) Discipling, baptizing, teaching the

nations "to obey everything Christ has commanded" (verse 20) must surely mean SEEKING CONVERSION ON BOTH A PERSONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL!

Rethinking the impact

Prophets confronted kings in the name of God — and His people! Moses versus Pharaoh: let my people go! Elijah versus Ahab and Jezebel: you have treacherously wronged one of my people (Naboth) when you stole his vineyard and murdered him! (1 Kings 21)

There is another side to the impact that arises from the Gospel-is-for-the-people proclamation. Namely, the messianic message is *communal*. Down through the ages this led to a *corpus christianum* idea: to the attempt to form Christian nations and a Christian civilization.

We know that this often floundered on the reefs of a struggle for power between the church and the state. We rightly strive for the separate responsibility of the home, government, school, church, business. We know today that each must keep an eye on each: for the well-being of ... yes, *all the people*.

History moves on. Our problem in North America is not that of Christendom, not that of a religious inquisition. Yet, we do have the problem of *civil religion*: the North American way of life is reluctant to hear the prophets and apostles. A moral minority will not change easily.

The problem today for us Christians is: how do we hold to a communal Gospel — for *all the people* — without pretending to be a moral majority (picking at some important issues, and rather God-and-countryish on others), even demanding something like an American theocracy ...?

Where have all the people gone?

All the people is a myth. There are *many* ways of life in our plural age. Which means that Christians can only be fully represented by Christian leaders, Christian schools, party or labour union. Is that not the *modern* demand, a demand that will impinge upon more and more Christians in the years to come? Is that not the untried way of social witness yet to sweep across North America?

That untried way will *not* sweep the continent unless we know that the axe is laid to the root of our individualistic yuletide years-end Christ-mas commercial giddiness ... and again hear the angel say: I bring you good news of great joy *that will be for all the people*. The Saviour has been born — now teach the nations to obey all that Christ commands.

Christmas in detail

Write a little story about Christmas, the teacher asked her grade five class just back from the Christmas holidays. Try to tell me in detail what it was like for you.

Johnny, a bright-eyed youngster whose father owned a grocery store, eagerly complied. This is what he wrote:



"Christmas is the nicest feast there is. Candles burn softly and we eat good food. We sit together in a cozy room and get a delicious cup of coffee, Maxwell brand, and a delicious almond ring from Voortman's, or a delicious cake, \$4.50. For the feast days we get peas and carrots mixed together, brand Green Giant, \$1.35 for a whole can."

Adapted from a book on children's comments

Pontius' Puddle





Chicken pox Christmas

Mary Steenland

It was the Christmas of the chicken pox. The excitement over a sudden and heavy snowfall diminished in disappointment as I began to feel the dizzied touch of fever. "Angels We Have Heard on High" somehow didn't strike me with the same chord of elated joy as it had the year before.

I heard muffled footsteps on the front porch and the ring of the doorbell. It was Grandma Pols, goodwill ambassador from next door, come to stay with me. There was to be a Christmas celebration at my grandparents' farm, and while mother had informed me that very afternoon that I would miss it, I had not really understood that she would leave. As she gathered her coat and gloves, I choked back my disappointment. She said there'd be another time. It was strange to think that Christmas would go on without me, pass me by.

Kind neighbour

Grandma Pols was always ready to help out my mother. My mother, undeservedly widowed well before her time and often stuck within her loneliness, relied with guilt and gratitude upon our neighbour's kindly graces and good will. Grandma Pols entered, placed her monumental self in mother's only brocade chair and settled in for a crochet marathon.

Her fingers flew with a speed that hooked and wove a web of lace beyond that which my eye could follow. She sucked quietly on Dutch peppermints, adjusted her glasses periodically and never spoke. Occasionally she glanced in my general direction, but never

spoke. Perhaps she needed to hold her breath in order to maintain the flickering momentum of her broad flying fingers.

Bedded down on the living room couch, I lay enwrapped in my flannels and blanket, watching the crochet hook only momentarily. My tired gaze moved about the room and finally fell upon the Christmas tree, lit and hung with mother's favourite balls and baubles. There was the bright red ball with a white frosted "Noel" around its middle, the little beaded basket that looked like real pearls, a bell with gaudy stripes and numerous plain shiny balls reflecting the room in round distortion. And if I were to venture a look in close proximity, I knew I'd meet my own red-pocked reflection looking back at me. I spared myself the humiliation. Over the tree was hung, with greatest attention to the latest, most fashionable display, "angel hair." Soft and glistening with glass fiber, it muted the colours into a quiet blur across the room.

Sparkle and delight

Alone within myself, I thought about the angels in my life, earthly angels, God-sends of a special kind. My quemple-footed grandma who stitched hand-made dolls at Christmas for my cousins and myself, had

made a life of doting on her children, each one precious as the next.

There was the angel-uncle who put sparkles on the Christmas fire, blue and green, even purple. He left us entertained and lit our eyes with wonder and enchantment with his magic box of sprinkles that made the flames dance a many-coloured dance.

There was the aunt who rolled her eyes and gestured with the gusto of a comedienne, full of fun and laughter. And the quiet uncle whose lap I longed to sit upon, his warmth and sensitivity radiating gently from his face. Too shy to ask, I basked within the aura at a distance.

There was the angel who, with engaging humour and mild teasing, played with us. With the sparkle and delight of a school boy, he bestowed upon us bynames, inviting all to join in his affectionate mischief!

I thought these angels would stay with me forever. Time then being of limitless extension, I thought they'd be forever there, surrounding me with the earthy strength of down-home roots and the gentle love of their presence.

Angels yet to come

Little did I then imagine angels yet to come, some who came into my life with unassuming tenderness so that I would come to understand the giftedness of what now is mine at Christmas.

There would be angels to sit up late with me through nights of darkness, holding out a small persistent light and calling me to reach for it. There would be an angel to feed me liver, rice and wine, and leave a chicken on my doorstep. There would be an angel calling through my kitchen, "Anybody home?," sitting down at my uncleared breakfast table and taking my children on her lap.

There yet would come a host, a host of angels, prodding, listening, teaching, comforting and working overtime. The day would come when a special angel, fighting death, relentless in his struggle, would touch my hand and pull me into angelhood. I could not have known their timeliness until their time had come.

A brief but bitter wave of cold air moved across the room late in the night. Mother was home, light snow falling from her coat and from her boots as she stomped them off on the doormat. Through the sonorous cocoon of my sleep, I

felt the abiding presence of Grandma Pols leaving the house. Mother laid a new Raggedy Ann beside me, stroked my cheek and gave me a long and silent look. The tree lights went out. I had spent my Christmas of the chicken pox ... with angels.

Mary Steenland paints, writes poetry and manages a family of five children in Pickering, Ontario.

Christmas

*In the bare churches of our fathers
where no neon tree
point-counterpointedly
flashed electronic branches
as if all the world were a video game*

*there the Word
phrase by phrase
descended to a place
of bare humility
while post-Eden humanity
held its breath.*

*Each participle of light
shone forth the more
as the barren walls
faded into night.*

*One heard the shepherds call
across the planes of Ephrata
and Herod thunder murder
through the land*

*while a wail of bells
rang out like Rachel weeping*

*and Simeon crying: Sovereign Lord
I may now go in peace ...*

*for when the amen came
it came with glory.*

Frank Sawyer

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and a prosperous
New Year.

1 Cor. 13

John & Grace Speelman

"My soul gives praise to the
Lord, and my spirit rejoices
in God my Saviour."
(Luke 1:46-47)

*Our warm wishes
for a blessed
Christmas and a
happy New Year.*



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and family

Waterdown, Ont.

John and Nancy
and family

Christmas and New Year's Greetings

Don't forget to send us your personal or family greetings to be included in the C.C. of December 20. Last year the response was heartwarming. The size of each greeting should be about one column inch. Just send us your message with a \$15.00 cheque or money order and we'll look after the rest. Do it today!

Stan De Jong,
Manager

P.S. We've extended the deadline to December 11!



Big events second

The big events take place quietly in second place: when the heavens break through the night only the shepherds see, in Rome the Caesar of might making his great census, didn't even count the Christ, yet His place was dispenseless.

Those who think themselves great don't notice things that seem small, but God shall exalt those who have faith in the Child above all. Even though He lay in the stable instead of in a palace 'on show,' this least One was really most able: in love He let everything go.

The big events take place today, too, in second place: that blindfolds fall from the heathen, how many notice this fact? This sign of His coming Kingdom, how many are aware of it? But the meek whom He calls together await Him, celebrate Advent.

Poems by Inge Lievaart
from ANNO DOMINI
published by Boekencentrum 1975
trans. Frank Sawyer

More than a word

Once the wonder happened,
then it became light,
the darkness was broken –
centuries of darkness ago.

Once, but we look back now:
is there any trace of it left,
light of this peace?
Chaos, angst for the bomb!

Only the word has remained,
to be given ever more dimly
to each new generation,
peace, it sounds more thinly.

Yet, he who has really heard,
must deny his own eyes,
in the midst of darkness confess:
peace is more than a word.



No star in sight

No star in sight, only the neon-bright
commercials
entice the wisemen of the West to buy
more and more during this Christmas time
and not to be ashamed of an overflowing table.

No star in sight, but wise or not, those now
ashamed
seek the way back to the Child and stable.
The world is a stable, is everywhere we're able
to go, and then He's there, one of us again.

Advent

I wanted to decorate
my heart worthily for Him:
He found the door blocked
by glistening virtues from within.

Then I wanted to empty it
so He'd find it clean enough:
useless, the broom of repentance
only increased the dust.

Beyond hope, I then decided
to do nothing at all:
He passed my door-of-let's-wait-and-see
and did not stop to call.

No virtuous repentance,
and no virtuous deeds
or even virtuous temperance
brought Him close to me.

But when I had to confess:
'I can only offer my guilt,
no room, or honour, or love':
then He filled my heart.

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wishes you all a Joy-filled Christmas
Season.

We would like to take this opportunity to
thank you all, churches and individuals
alike for your contributions to our
ministry, helping us help others, meeting
their spiritual, physical and emotional
needs.



Our warm good
wishes for a bright
holiday season
and a happy,
prosperous
New Year.

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The Real Thing

Jacoba Bos

"C'mon, pal. Move over and let me in," Nancy said as she held the front door with one hand and tried to move the big dog with the other. Pal, excited at seeing Nancy home from school, continued the exuberant welcome with wagging tail and warm tongue.

"I know you're glad I'm home and so am I, but get out of my way. I'm busy." She slipped off her boots and ran through the empty house into her upstairs bedroom.

Throwing her mittens on the bed, she opened the dresser drawer. There, under the clean socks, she found her treasure; five one-dollar bills neatly folded in an envelope. All summer long Nancy had saved her money for a Christmas present for her mother. Ever since Dad had left their family, Mom had worked in a department store. With the Christmas rush, Mom would come home tired.

Last night, while John, Nancy and Mom were busy with dishes, John had asked about a Christmas tree.

"Real trees cost money, you know, and that's something we don't have enough of," Mom had sighed. "And I don't want a fake tree." She added, "I see too much artificial stuff at work; I want to have the real thing."

A surprise is planned

Nancy felt a lump growing in her throat. No tree this Christmas? No coloured lights and tinsel? With a heavy heart she had spread out the newspapers in Pal's box under the kitchen table. That's when she saw the ad. "Christmas trees for five dollars," the ad said. Five dollars! That's exactly what she had saved. She had wanted to jump for joy, but since she wanted it to be a surprise, she had whispered something in Pal's ears, who had wagged his tail as if he understood.

Nancy counted the bills once

more, lining them up on the pink bedspread. One crisp new dollar bill was from Fred, Mom's former boyfriend.

"Here's some money, Blondie. Now go get yourself an ice-cream cone or something." He smiled, showing off his gold teeth. Fred did not come to see Mom anymore. Nancy wondered why. She had overheard Mom say to Joan, her friend, "Oh, Fred's all right; he's a good guy, but the feeling I have for

skinny and begging for a home. His sad eyes fixed on John, who had promised to pay for his keep.

Nancy pulled her parka hood tight around her face as she started the long walk to Woodview Farm. She felt the money safe inside her pocket;

looked. Maybe their tree at home could look that nice too. A neighbour, Mrs. Armstrong, had given her a box filled with tinsel, coloured balls, silver bells, and an angel with silk hair.

"To help make Christmas

turn right. Her side ached; her legs felt like rubber; but, in the distance, she saw a large farmhouse surrounded by trees.

"That's the place! That's Woodview!" She nearly shouted it out, while with renewed energy she walked along the lonely road. "We're going to have a Christmas tree, for Mom and John and me." She sang to herself as she trudged along on the rough gravel, her feet numb, her icy fingers wrapped around the money in her pocket. In her mind, Nancy pictured the tree, with real needles that smelled like pine.

With a sigh of relief she turned into the laneway leading to Woodview. A polelight lit up the farm yard. Nancy saw rows of Christmas trees. There were small trees.

"Must be for apartments," Nancy thought. There were tall trees with full branches.

"Those look big enough for a church," Nancy reflected. One tree was leaning against the fence all by itself. It's dark green branches were full and fragrant.

"Little tree, you are mine!" Nancy hummed as she held the fragrant tree close, it's needles tickling her face. "But where do I pay?" she wondered as she looked around the yard and towards the house shrouded in darkness. "Maybe the owner went to town and will be home soon." Nancy sat down on the frozen ground, shivering while the wind moaned a sad song through the pine branches....

Something warm and wet on her cheek awoke Nancy. She tried to stand but there was no feeling in her legs.

"Oh, Pal, how did you get here? Oh Pal." She buried her face in the dog's warm coat and cried. Pal barked, his noisy bark. A light went on in the house; a door opened, and a man's voice said, "Somebody there?"

Continued next page...



him is not the real thing." Mom had wanted the real thing. This Christmas at least she would have a real tree; Nancy would see to that.

Determined, she raced down the stairs, almost tripping over Pal who wanted to follow her outside.

"No, Pal! You can't go; you stay. Stay, I said. John will be home soon. I have to go now." She locked the door and put the key under the stone beside the step. John would find it there when he came home from hockey practice. John was two years older than Nancy, already a teenager. He was saving his money for a new hockey stick. Most of his paper route money was spent on dog food for Pal.

"That dog is going to eat us into the poor house," Mom had sighed when John had brought him home, dirty and

the newspaper ad folded over it. She walked fast.

A cold task

"I have to get there before dark," she thought. "My mittens!" she said out loud, feeling the cold wind on her bare hands. "I left them on the bed when I counted the money," she remembered, "but I don't have time to go back." She hurried along. The wind grew stronger and the sky became a dark grey. Nancy felt the cold creeping into her thin boots, numbing her toes. The homes she passed were decorated for Christmas, looking warm and inviting. Through a big window she saw a man decorating a tree, holding a little boy in his arms.

"That must be a real father," Nancy thought as she slowed her pace to take in the scene. How beautiful that tree

joyful," she had said when she brought the box over. "Of course," the true joy is because Jesus was born at Christmas. He gives us Love, the real thing," she had remarked. Nancy liked Mrs. Armstrong. She often brought over home-made apple pie and once, when Mom was sick, Mrs. Armstrong came and made supper for the three of them.

The thought of apple pie made Nancy's mouth water.

"It can't be far now," she told herself.

"Turn right at the lights," the ad said. Nancy could see the traffic lights blinking red and green in the distance. Cars zoomed by, their headlights piercing the growing darkness.

Almost there

Nancy started running. Soon she reached the corner. Now

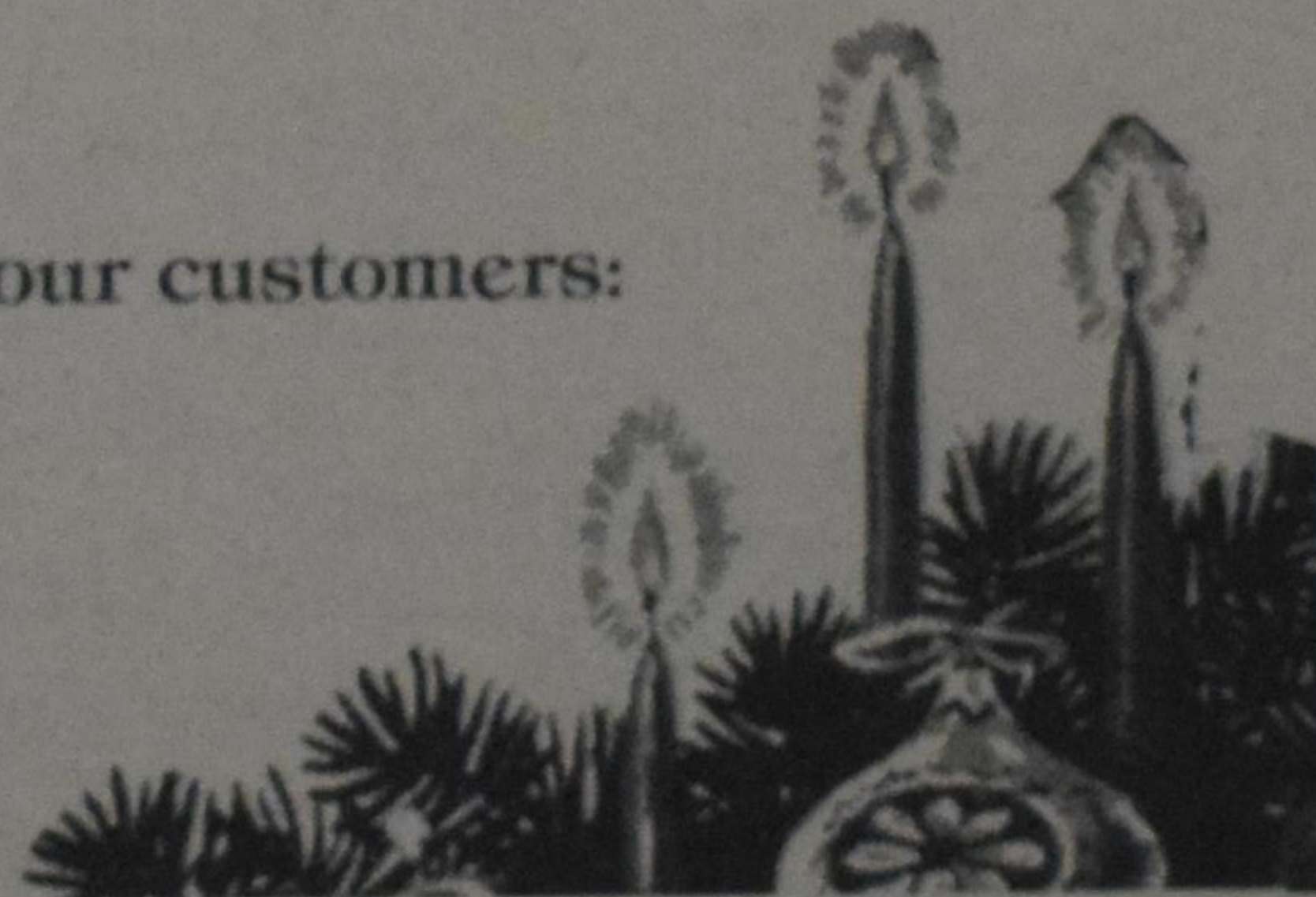
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... continued from previous page.

A wonderful warmth

"Yes, Yes sir. It's me, Nancy Jones, and I want to buy this tree, the one that was standing all by itself over there by the fence. My Mom says"

"Can't hear a word you're saying, child," the gruff voice interrupted, "Come in the house." Nancy tried to walk but her numb feet would not move. Her swollen fingers took hold of Pal's collar, who patiently led her to the open door of the farm house. The little Christmas tree clutched in Nancy's arm.

"My word, child! Where do you come from? Now sit here." The man pointed to an old rocking chair beside an enormous wood stove which spread a wonderful warmth through the kitchen. Nancy stumbled into the chair and put the tree carefully on the floor. Pal stood waiting in the doorway, his head cocked to one side as if waiting for an invitation.

"Come in, dog. You may as well get warm too. That's a mean North wind out there," the old farmer said as he took off his ragged jacket and spread it under Nancy's feet.

"You lay on there, dog," Pal did as he was told. Nancy felt the warmth flow through her body; her feet were tingling.

"Now tell me how you got here and how you intend to get this tree home," the kind farmer insisted as he put a steaming mug of tea in front of her.

"I ..., I ... wanted ... My Mom said she wanted only the real thing and I was going to surprise her for Christmas and Mrs. Armstrong gave me an angel with silk hair and red balls, and silver bells with a picture of men on camels looking at a big star in the sky" He listened patiently while Nancy told her story.

"Well, we'd better get a hold of your mother, she'll be worried, you know." He shuffled into the dark dining room.

"Yes, Yes. She's fine. Just cold," Nancy heard him say. "Yes, she may stay here until

you pick her up. That's right, turn right at the lights. First place on your left. You're welcome," Nancy heard Mr. Woods say. She was glad she did not have to talk to Mom for a lump was forming in her throat again. She sipped her tea, her red fingers wrapped around the mug. Pal, still stretched out by her feet, sighed contentedly. The wood in the stove cracked and the tea kettled hummed a tune. Nancy wished she could stay a while in the warm kitchen with the old man whose eyes smiled while he listened. She wondered if Daddy's father looked like Mr. Woods.

"There's a car turning in the driveway, must be your folks." The gruff voice startled Nancy from her musings. There was a knock on the door, then a lady's voice asked, "Is Nancy here?" Mrs. Armstrong, her cheeks rosy like apples and her voice sweet like her apple pie, came in.

Always alone

"Nancy, oh Nancy ... we were so worried. Your Mom and I didn't know where to look for you and when I opened the front door of your house, Pal shot out the door like a bullet. There was no holding him back." At the sound of his name, Pal stood up, ears erect as if awaiting instructions.

"Yes, that's a good dog. These Collies are good dogs for finding their way," Mr. Woods said as he gently stroked Pal's fur.

"And how can we ever thank you for your kindness?" Mrs. Armstrong continued, turning to Mr. Woods who shyly looked down at his feet to where a toe stuck out of a hole in his grey socks.

"That's all right, ma'am. I, I ... rather enjoy young'uns. Seldom see them, seeing as I'm always alone after mother died."

"You're always here all by yourself?" Nancy whispered, her eyes wide in amazement.

"Yep. Always alone. Although at Christmas I see a few people when I sell some trees off the place."

"I'll tell you what," Mrs.

Armstrong took control of the situation. "How would you like to come to my place for Christmas with Nancy and her family?"

"Yes, please do, Mr. Woods. Then you can see our tree with the angel with the silk hair and the silver bells. Please say yes, Mr. Woods," Nancy pleaded, her eyes aglow at the thought of the tree resplendent in glitter and colour. Mr. Wood's eyes smiled.

"Well now, that's real kind of you ma'am. I reckon I could do that."

"Good then. That's settled. Now Nancy, how about getting your coat on and I'll take you home. Your mother is anxious to see you."

Pal was at the door licking Mr. Wood's hand as the man patted the big dog. "There now, you take care of the girl," he said softly.

"Thanks, Mr. Woods." Nancy, on tiptoe, planted a kiss on his stubbled cheek. "See you at Christmas."

"Oh, my tree," she suddenly remembered. Mr. Woods handed it to her carefully, as if it were a china doll.

"Isn't it beautiful? It's the real thing," she sighed.

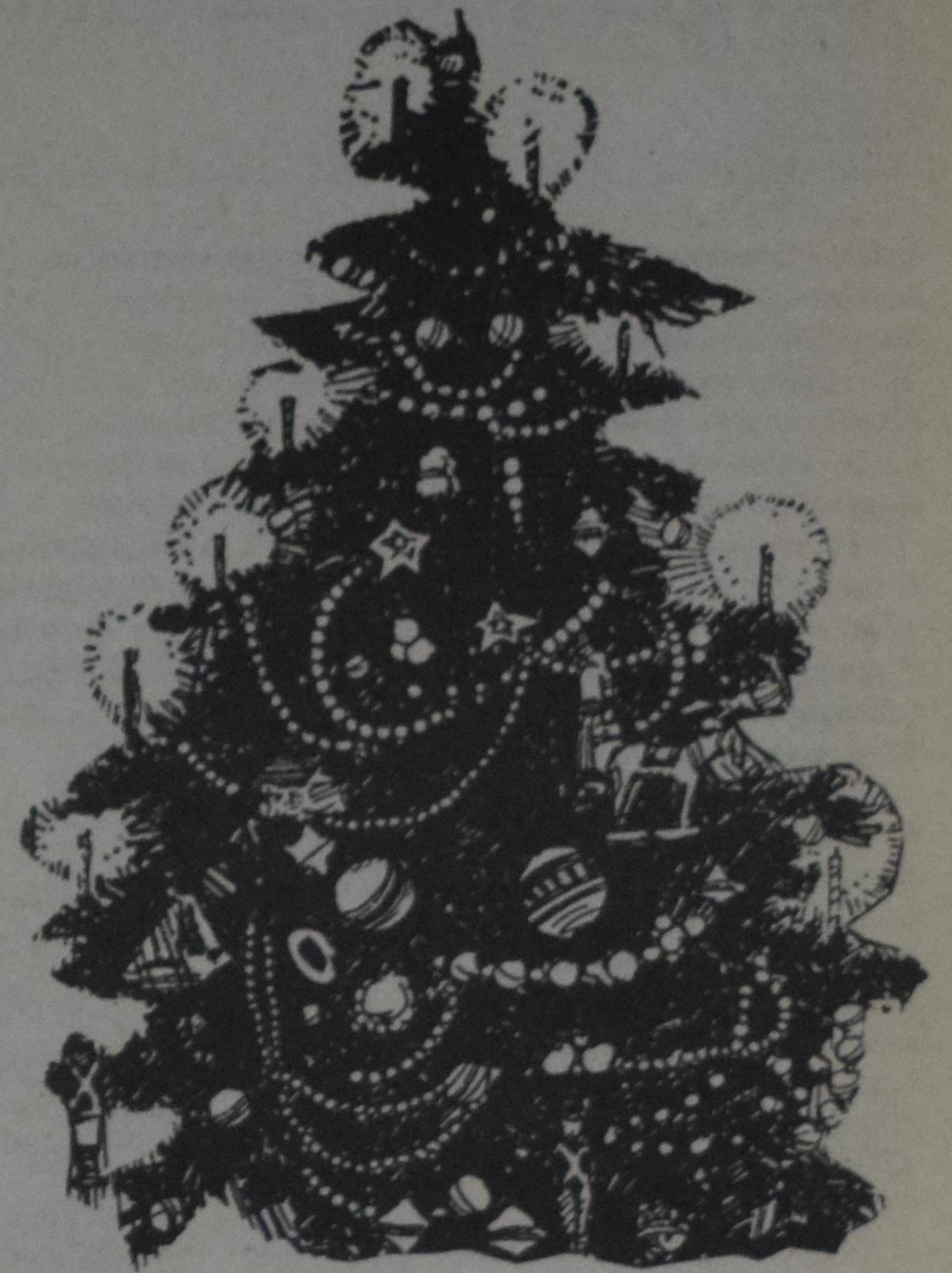
Good News

That Christmas, after the church service, they were all gathered around Mrs. Armstrong's tree which was almost as nice as Nancy's. Nancy and John were on the floor with Pal. Mr. Wood looked somewhat uneasy in a suit and freshly shaven. But Mrs. Armstrong's easy smile

and warm apple pie soon made him feel at home, and Mom was happy to have family and friends around her.

"This Christmas I'm happy for the real thing," Mom said as she adjusted an angel who was about to fall face down into a popcorn string. "I'm thankful for the real neighbourly love our friends have shown us. But the real thing I give thanks for is not the beautiful tree that Mr. Woods gave Nancy," she continued, "but it's God's love for us. He cared enough for us to send us His son."

Nancy looked at the angel face, the shiny silk hair reflecting the coloured lights. The angel looked like Mrs.



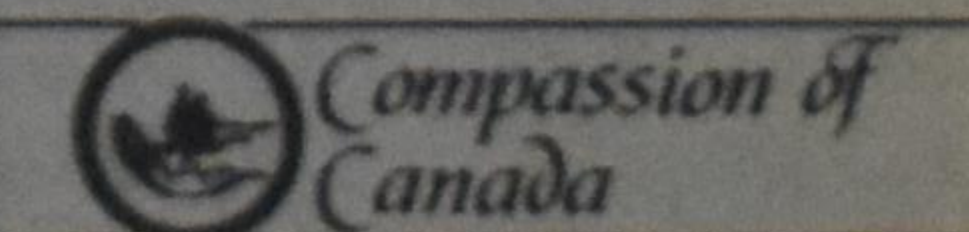
Armstrong, Nancy's angel who had told her the Good News about the Real Thing this Christmas.

Jacoba Bos has published stories in magazines and lives in Strathroy, Ontario.

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Give a good book for Christmas

Cookbooks

Eclectic fare from eclectic folks

Those Marvelous Church Suppers, edited by Elaine Towgood and Anne Nightingale. Winfield, B.C.: Wook Lake Books, Inc. 184 pp.; spiral-bound softcover, \$12.95. Reviewed by Marian Van Til, C.C. editorial assistant.

This eminently useful cookbook "celebrates a Canadian heritage" — church suppers. It's a compilation of recipes submitted by several hundred Christians from churches of all stripes. Publisher Ralph Milton says in his foreword, it's "a book about what the word community means, and about a very special



group of people we call the "Marthas" — those women (and more recently, men) who give hours of their time cooking for and hosting potluck church suppers.

The recipes fall into six mouth-watering categories: Cool Drinks and Nibbles, Chowders and Soups, Salads and Veggies, Main Dishes, Puddin's and Pies, and Cookies, Muffins and More. There is, of course, also an index. What's more, accompanying the recipes are interesting morsels of information about their origins or about the people who submitted/created them.

Candid photos taken at church suppers enhance the book's overall appearance.

There is one Christian Reformed offering — by Paul De Groot, Religion Editor for the *Edmonton Journal* and one of C.C.'s Western correspondents. He submitted a banana-orange-pineapple drink he calls BOP (I've tried it; it's good stuff!), accompanied by a humorous "exegesis" of the recipe.

Not only does this book contain many excellent recipes, but it gives a glimpse into the kitchens and lives of Christians around the country. Though we will likely never agree on certain theological points, if this book gets around, we'll be eating "ecumenically" — and enjoying it.



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Christmas

**Love and
laughter**

Christmas Cameos, by Dorothy Cameron Smith. Burlington, Ont.: G.R. Welch Publishers, Inc., 1985. Black and white ill., 92 pp. Reviewed by Lini R. Grol, Fonthill, Ontario.

Christmas Cameos is the fourth *Cameos* book by Dorothy Cameron Smith, (but her fifth book). This shows that this author is favoured by her readers. Born and raised in St. Catharines, Mrs. Smith now lives in Hamilton where she has a short, daily radio program. Her poetry and short stories have been in international publications, and she is favoured as a public speaker. *Christmas Cameos*, as all her writing, reflects her warm personality and great sense of humor. Her religious stories and poetry have a down to earth flavour as it often does for those for whom religion is part of daily life.

As in her other *Cameos*, *Christmas Cameos* is illustrated with the black and white scissor-cut illustrations, some seen in her previous *Cameos* books. *Christmas Cameos* will be favoured at Christmas by her true fans and become a tradition. Traditions enrich our lives and bind families and friends.

In this age of fast changes and insecurities in life and family, we need traditions, and *Christmas Cameos* is a good book to start with. For there is love and laughter to be shared in its being read out loud. Love and laughter make any day, but especially Christmas, memorable and meaningful. *Christmas Cameos* is all that.



Narrator

If on account of unbelief today
nobody is in church to hear the message,
that does not change its importance for
society;
the heart is cold without the Gospel's light.
Reverting back to pre-easter times
is a strange way to seek progress.

Some will ask why it was necessary
to slaughter the boys of Bethlehem.
Blame not God but the Roman despot Herod
who in a rage hoped to exterminate
any challenge to his throne, just like
all who think first of their own power.

The Magi

We came riding into Jerusalem
trying to find the house where Jesus was.
We did not know, of course, at that time
that his name was Joshua, nor
that his birth was a divine secret
revealed but to few — we among them.

First Astrologer

A funny thing happened:
as I watched the heavens
one night after the rest
of the court scientists
had long retired
I saw a new light
and brighter than the rest.
Since we subsidized intellectuals
have to name our discoveries
I called it *stella diurna nova*,
which they tell me in translation
is: a new morningstar.
I like to liken this
to finding a new symbol
in a Persian rug.
And to think I was the first ...

Second Astrologer

Of course I was skeptical.
But there it was, night
after night. We could not sleep,
we lost all thought of food;
I wanted to write a thesis
explaining the birth of this
heavenly body, but the king
was more interested in financing
an expedition, for it seemed
that the *nova* was moving west.

The Star of the Nativity

Frank Sawyer

(mutatis mutandis a la mode T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden)



The rendezvous of the Magi with Herod from Duc de Berry Book of Hours

Third Astrologer

So we set off loaded
with dried peaches and plums,
yogurt and precious spices,
our purses full of silver.
What a journey! The mountains
full of grandeur, but the rain
sometimes delaying us for hours.
We lost one camel-boy
— our best mule skinner —
by an accident in the mist;
another ran away with
some foreign girl. How
happy we were to see
the domes of Jerusalem
after so many months.

Magi

We prayed to the gods by the wailing
wall and offered our thanks for safety
underway. Herod was gracious and helpful,
calling some scribes together to pin point
a little village called Bethlehem.

Narrator

How to explain that the theologians
knew the prophecy in Micah 5,
that they found the answer so quickly,
but didn't bother to go to visit the child?

Something in this is not unlike Herod
who claimed he wanted to worship him, too.

It was not the first time that Israel
looked to Egypt for refuge.

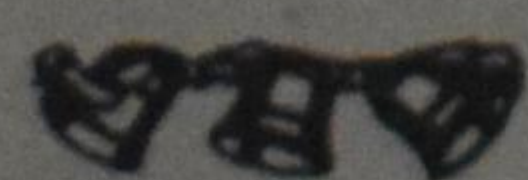
Magi

We're heading back, circumlocating the
palace.
We've seen the new King. There is much
political unrest; some speak of messianic
promises and a bright future.
Like all *nova*, this one is hard to define.
They say Rachel is weeping once more,
while others talk about a new peace
for the world. There may be international
consequences; our hearts are glad,
yet we await the coming years
to see more of the Kingdom that shall come.

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Room 645 — chronic care

Emma Dykstra

"Mrs. Brown slept well; Mrs. Collins was up twice during the night; Mrs. Deans, no change; Mrs. Fernandes' condition seems worse" I make notes as the night nurse gives report — a scanty account of an uneventful night.

I had looked at the assignment sheet with a sinking feeling. My fifth day in room 645! My back is beginning to ache. Six elderly ladies who need complete care. Six pairs of eyes that greet me without recognition each morning. Five of them have been there for over a year. Mrs. Kuchinger, the sixth one, has come from a local nursing home. Diagnosis: fever of unknown origin. She speaks English poorly and what she says usually makes little sense. However, even if her mind didn't wander, conversation would be impossible, my German running the meagre gamut of *Guten Morgen, bitte, danke schon* and "*Haben Sie Schmerz?*" Nevertheless she is the only one in the room that talks and each time some Anglo-Saxon tongue mispronounces the "ch," she repeats her name, *Kuchinger, Kuchinger*, emphasizing those guttural letters in the middle of her name.

Call if you need help

Report over, I make my way to the storage room. I'll need one laundry cart and six wheel chairs. The girl assigned to the adjoining room gives me a sympathetic look. "Call me when you're ready and I'll help you lift the old gals into their wheelchairs."

I line up my vehicles outside the door. Let's open these curtains; let some sunlight into this room. I take everyone's temperature, pulse, and respirations routinely. This is silly, "t.p.r." each morning — but that's the procedure. Mrs.

trays and with them a volunteer to help feed. She rolls up Mrs. Kuchinger's bed, places the tray in front of her, and says, "You try to feed yourself, dear."

"Nicht 'dear' — 'Frau Kuchinger,'" is the pointed reply. Good for you!

interest me but I smile benignly. It's good to be away from the ward for 15 minutes. Away from the stale body odours. Away from the smells of urine and excrement.

Is it worth it?

As I return, my co-worker

pulls me out of the chair, "Come on, I've got patients to look after too. Let's get these ladies into the lounge."

Together we wheel the patients down the hall. In the lounge someone has put on a record of Christmas carols. "O Come, All Ye Faithful," while all the faithful are being wheeled to the lounge.

Clean laundry is plentiful today, a rare occurrence, so we'll strip all six beds. I open a window. A blast of icy air is invigorating but only for a moment. Let's turn the mattresses while we're at it.

The music has stopped in the lounge and I go to turn the record over. This is the time when I should sit down and visit. Play a game of chess or just hold a hand for a while. But there are other duties waiting and I feel so tired that I have nothing to give. Behind me Mrs. Kuchinger starts to sing snatches of a song. I know that song! Or at least I know the Dutch version of it. I squat down beside her and start to sing. "Weet gij hoeveel sterren kleven aan de blauwe hemelboog." ("Do you know how many stars cling to the blue firmament"). Then all of a sudden she sings the entire German text through flawlessly. I sing along with her in German this time. "Weisst du wieviel Sternen stehen ..." and my pronunciation is even more atrocious than I had realized. She puts both arms around me and gives me a hug.

At the nurse's station I pull out my charts still singing. The head nurse looks at me. "That a Christmas carol you're singing?"

"It is today," I say.

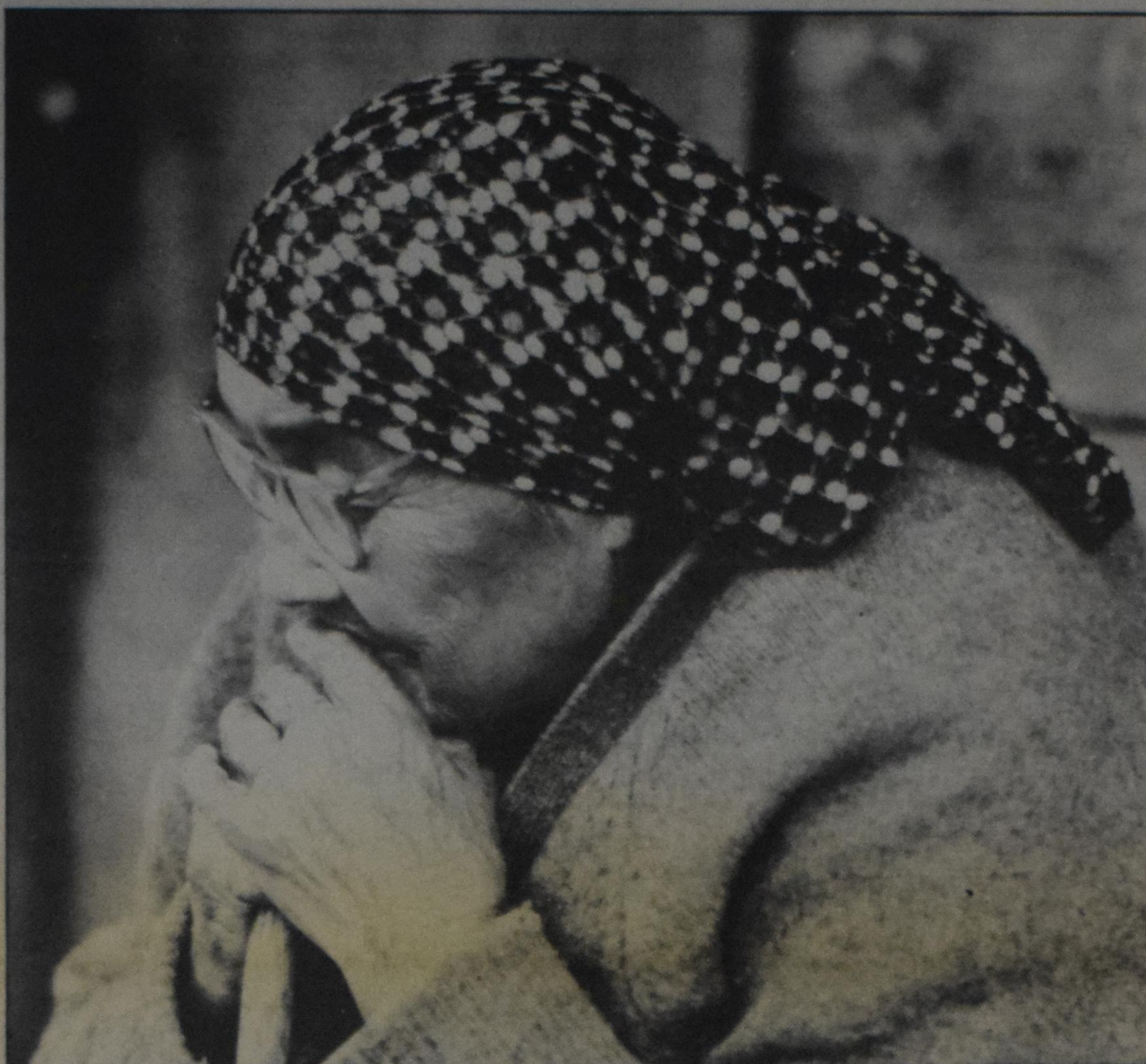
"Dutch, isn't it?"

"No, German."

"Oh well, German and Dutch are pretty much the same, aren't they?"

"Close," I say. "Pretty close," and start to do my charting.

Emma Dykstra is an assistant librarian at the Bowmanville library and a homemaker.



Kuchinger's temperature is normal now but each evening it goes up. The others haven't changed in six months.

Breakfast trays will be here in 20 minutes. If I hustle, I can get two bed baths done before that time. Baby powder, lots of it; sprinkle it all over. A sweeter smell. Come on, Mrs. Jones, let's get you up a little higher in the bed. Bend your knees and dig in your heels. That's it.

Mrs. Brown, don't favour that one side so much. You're developing a bed sore on that hip.

Here come the breakfast

Breakfast is over — four more bed baths. I'm making good progress this morning. No interruptions by doctors' visits or lab technicians taking blood. Not even one leaky catheter.

I'm on early coffee break. My charges will have to be put in their wheelchairs when I return.

In the cafeteria the girl across from me chatters on about how she hopes she will have enough crystal and silverware to accommodate her Christmas dinner guests. The state of her crystal and silver does not

from down the hall saunters in. I fall down heavily into one of the armchairs and look at her. "Don't you ever wonder why we do this? Day after day, the same routine; never any response, only a blank stare. Is there any point to it?"

"Yes, I do — lots of times. But then I tell myself, it's not important why I do but rather that I do. Sometimes that helps."

"You're a saint," I tell her.

"Remnants of a Quaker upbringing. 'God has no hands but these'," she mumbles. Then, grasping my hand, she

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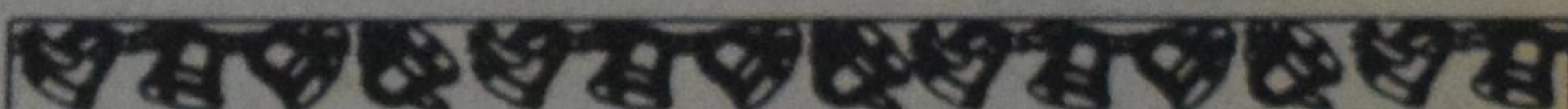
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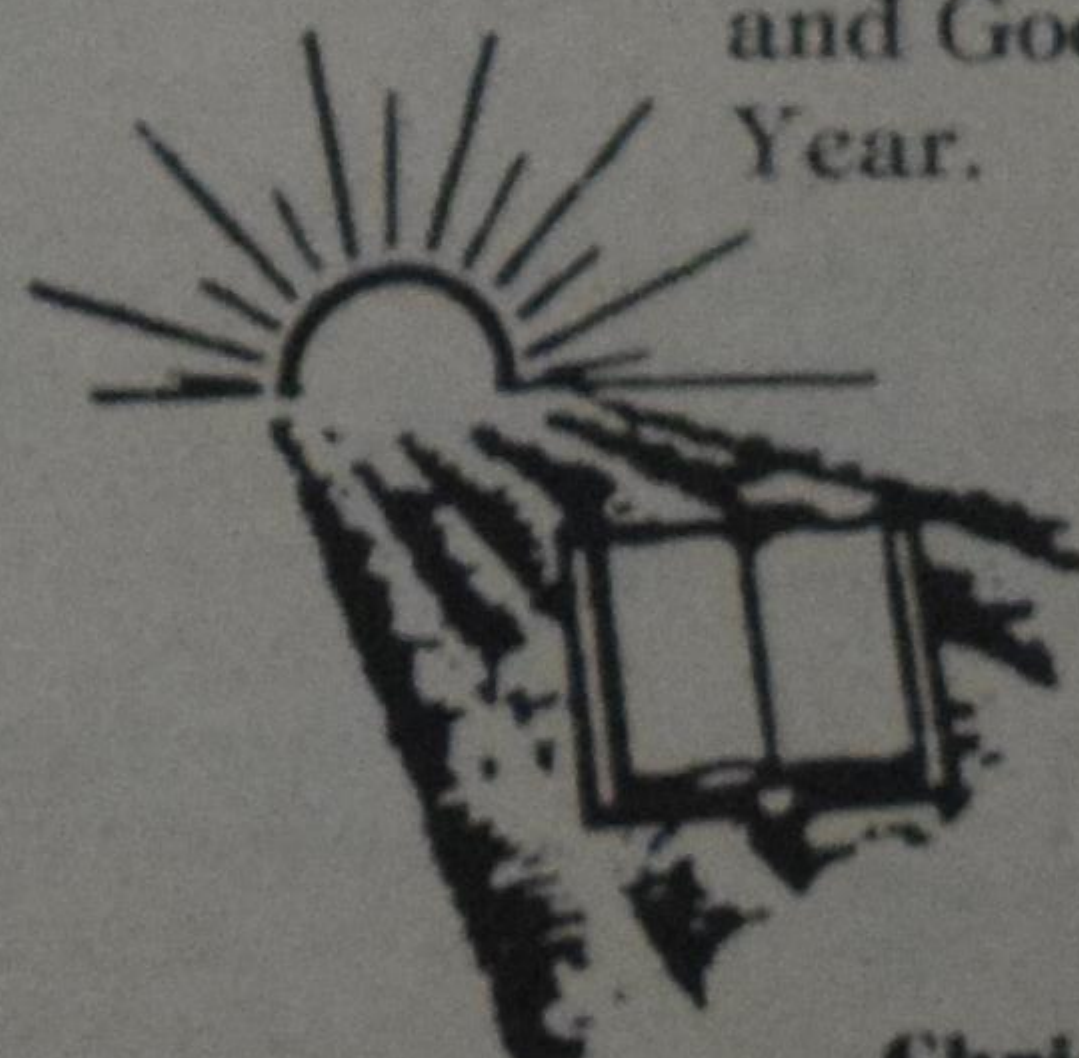
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The Executive and Staff of CFFO wish all members and friends a joy-filled Christmas and God's care for the New Year.



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Carol quiz

Match the numbered translations with the Christmas carols and songs.

1. Pay heed! Celestial harbingers vocalize.



2. Ecstasy directed towards the terrestrial orb.
3. During after-hours ovine supervision by accredited persons.
4. The primal seasonal salutation communicated by spiritual beings.
5. Quiescent and consecrated nocturnal period.
6. Approach each person (male or female) who exhibits fidelity.
7. Absent in a trough adapted to bovine nutrition.



8. Hey, quasi-urbanized area southwest of Jerusalem.
9. The prepubertal percussionist.
10. Embellish the indoor routes of access and egress.

Author unknown

Answers to Carol Quiz
(Read backwards)

gnIS slegnA dIareH ehT !kraH
dlroW ehT ot yod
thgiN yb skcolF riehT dehctaW sdrehpehS elihW
gnIS did slegnA eht llewoN tarIF ehT
thgiN yloH ,thgiN tnelIS
lufhtalFeY lIA ,emoC O
regnaM a ni yawA
mehelhticB fo nwoT eltiL ,O
yob remmurD eltiL ehT
slahE ehT kceD

Christmas
and
New Year's
greetings

Don't forget to send us your personal or family greetings to be included in the C.C. of December 20. Last year the response was heart-warming. The size of each greeting should be about *one column inch*. Just send us your message with a \$15.00 cheque or money order and we'll look after the rest. Do it today!

Stan de Jong,
Manager

P.S. We've extended the deadline to December 11!

Cinema Summaries

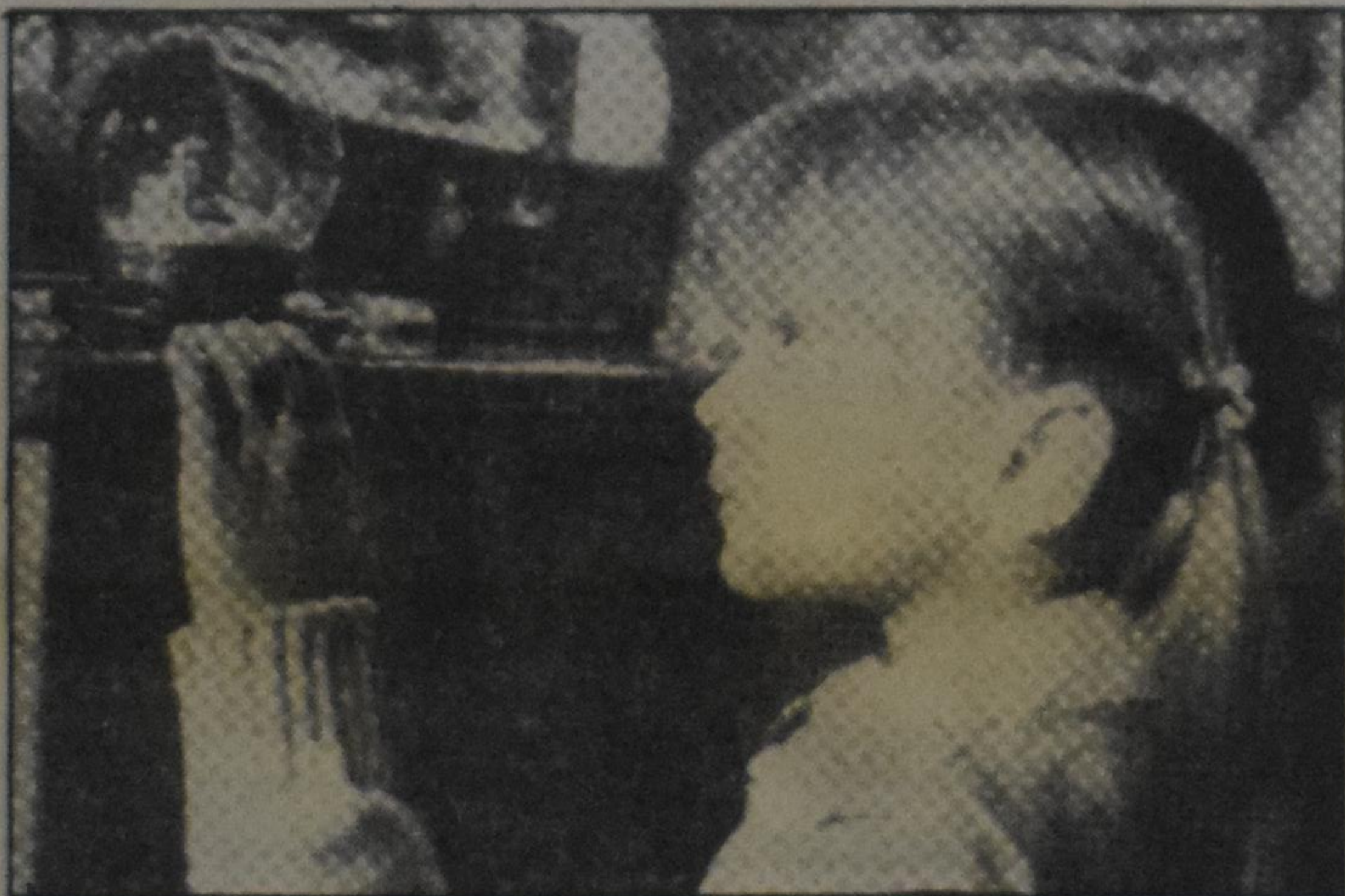
Anya DeJager-Seerveld

One Magic Christmas

Rated Family
Stars Mary Steenburgen, Elizabeth Harnois, Henry Dean Stanton, Gary Basarabas, Robbie Magwood, Jan Rubes, and Arthur Hill.
Directed by Phillip Borsos.

Do you believe in the "magic" of Christmas or the "spirit" of Christmas? Do you believe in children's "innocence?" The pivotal character in *One Magic Christmas*, Gideon (Stanton) was once a cowboy who died on Christmas Day while saving a drowning boy. This one time cowboy is now an angel who must help one person per Christmas season to find the "Christmas spirit." Ginny, (Steenburgen) is elected. We don't find out how she lost "it" (the Christmas spirit) but her daughter Abbie, (Harnois) with the aid of Gideon, helps her regain it.

In an intriguing fantasy sequence, Ginny, the mom, lives through what she thinks could happen to her in the future. ("Nothing is working out right for us" she says to her husband.) Her husband is killed, her children kidnapped by the killer, and then the children drown in a river but are miraculously saved by Gideon. Ginny does recapture "it" (the magic of Christmas) by the end of the movie and is thankful for what she does indeed have.



Director Phillip Borsos makes it difficult for one to decide whether this movie is aimed at the reality of adults and the fantasy of children or the fantasy of adults and the reality of children. This is one of the movie's charms. Borsos fuzzes the fine line between reality and fantasy.

Children seeing *One Magic Christmas* may see a mom who puts a damper on her family's Christmas spirit by saying that one gift is enough for each child and that they have to save their money because dad (Basarabas) doesn't have a job anymore. On the other side, adults may find the magic of Christmas in Abbie's child-like faith in angels and in Santa Claus — they can fix anything, or at least can suggest how something or someone can be fixed.

When Abbie meets Santa Claus (Rubes) in his home in the North Pole one feels that even the "magic" of Christmas has gone too far. When a movie has both an angel and Santa Claus, Santa loses out. An angel that zaps a (red Canadian) mailbox with dazzling light to retrieve a letter is much more credible than red-bellied Santa zipping around the sky at inter-galactic speed. Santa is hard-pressed to suit the computer age.

Gideon's quiet task — to help one person find the Christmas magic — is overshadowed by Santa's material gifts. Abbie and Cal, Ginny's children, have faith that things will be given to them, but never once consider giving something to someone else. The fact that Christmas can only really be celebrated through the (buying and) giving of gifts is marginally offset by Jack, the father, who puts together a bicycle for a "poor" girl. Jack also organizes and collects enough money to buy and decorate the town Christmas tree.

Does the magic of Christmas consist of opening the wallet ("and buying something made in Taiwan that'll break in two days" as Ginny says to her husband)? Or does magic mean the dream-like pleasure of Santa Claus' house and workshop in the North Pole where everyone is happy? Or is Borsos inviting you to think of an alternative through Gideon's faith. Perhaps the spirit and magic of Christmas is something that falls on the fuzzy line between reality and fantasy.

Anya DeJager-Seerveld co-owns Coffee Coffee on the corner of Yonge and Bloor Streets, Toronto, Ontario.

Season's Greetings to
our clients and friends

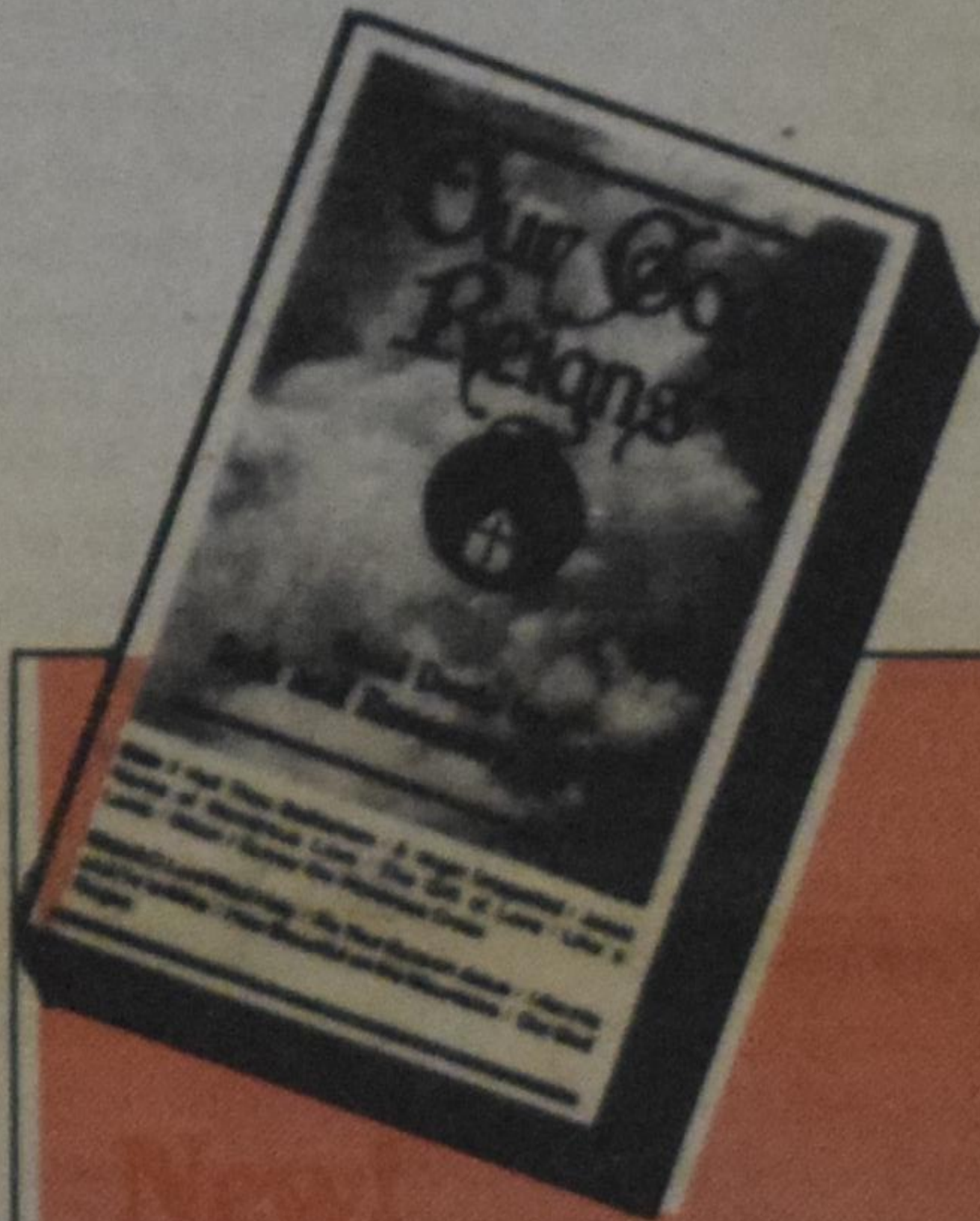
We give thanks to the Lord, and rejoice
in His blessings.

We wish you a blessed Christmas and
His guidance throughout the New Year.



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of Wondrous Love; When I Survey the
Wondrous Cross; O Lord Most Holy; I
Am His and He Is Mine; and How
Beautiful on the Mountains.*

Jack and Rosemary DeVos are
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But the greatest is love

Berta Hosmar

With a frown, Rebecca looked at the contents of the wicker basket on the table. It really didn't seem like an awful lot to give to an old man whom you visited only twice a year. Perhaps she should add a jug of wine to the dates, grapes, pomegranates and the two loaves of freshly baked bread. If her father could not eat all of his gifts, he could always share it with his sister and brother-in-law who took care of him. That is to say, if he had enough sense to do so; you never knew how he would react. Sometimes he seemed glad to see her and asked eagerly how her family was, other times he'd have a strange glow in his eyes and seemed to be lost in a strange and frightening world of his own.

That's the way it had been for about 30 years now, and Rebecca had to admit that it made no difference to her how her father felt or acted. She performed her daughterly duties, made sure she left enough money for her elderly uncle and aunt each time she visited so they could buy her father what he needed, and for the rest, her father's condition left her totally cold and unmoved.

Useless burden

Sometimes, with a sudden flash of total honesty she would admit to herself that she wished her father would die. He was useless, a burden to his relatives; and who really loved him? His only daughter certainly didn't? She still felt guilty at times for feeling this way, but she always quickly suppressed those feelings.

It had not always been like this.

Rebecca could remember her father's hearty laugh when she was a young girl, her parents' only child. He would tell her stories at bedtime and he had taught her how to read and write.



"When Rebecca was eight years old, mother had given birth to Rueben..."

Mother was the gentle, softspoken figure in the background, and when Rebecca was eight years old, mother had given birth to Rueben. Chubby little Rueben with his pitchblack hair and blue eyes resembled a true son of Israel.

Rebecca shivered when she recalled the events that had followed. Even now, some 30 years later, the hurt and the pain were not completely gone.

When Rueben was almost a year old and happiness was complete in their affluent home

in the town of Bethlehem, mother had suddenly died of a mysterious fever. Her once so happy father had been totally devastated and in his intense grief he did little to comfort his nine-year-old daughter, but left the care of his young son and his household to hired help.

For days on end he would sit and stare straight ahead until friends and relatives would persuade him to eat something and do something.

Rebecca remembered how bewildered she had been. Mother was gone and father acted like a stranger.

With a fierce, protective love she started to take care of her little brother. She taught him his first words, helped him when he took his first steps, comforted him when he cried and tucked him in when he was sleepy.

Several months later, her father started to emerge from his shell of grief and slowly the small family pulled itself together again.

And then it happened, the senseless, brutal murder of all the little boys in Bethlehem who were two years old or

younger.

Bitter weeping in Ramah

The insane King Herod had heard rumors that the Messiah had been born in this peaceful little town, and he had felt that his throne was threatened.

Father and Rebecca had buried Rueben's decapitated, bleeding little body, and life had lost all its lustre.

"The Scriptures have foretold this. Jeremiah said, 'In Ramah there is bitter

weeping, Rachel is weeping for her children and she cannot be comforted, for they are no more', " her father had mumbled over and over again.

He lost the will to live and gradually withdrew into a strange world of his own, leaving Rebecca even more grief-stricken and lost.

His relatives had taken him away to their home in another town and had nursed him ever since. Rebecca had gone to live with another aunt, far from Bethlehem, that town of mourning. Her relatives had treated her well but could not penetrate into her world of sadness and helpless anger towards her father. Why did her father not comfort his daughter? He had lost wife and son, but Rebecca had lost mother and brother and now also her father. Often, at night, she would wake up screaming and relive that awful moment when crying little Rueben had been torn from her protecting arms. Her bitterness towards her father grew as she became older and she could feel no compassion for the suffering man.

And then, at age 15, Joel had come into her life. She had married him soon after, and life had been good ever since.

True, she knew that she did not really love her kind-hearted, much older, and rather humorless husband, but Joel had given her the sense of security and belonging she so desperately needed.

Joel was a respected, well-to-do merchant, and their marriage had been blessed with a dearly loved daughter, Sarah, who had also married at 15 and had made Rebecca a grandmother. Five-year-old Jonathan and his sister, three-year-old Miriam, were the

delight of Rebecca's heart.

Gentle urgings ignored

Joel's success had rubbed off on Rebecca. She was well-liked, treated her servants and slaves well, and no beggar was ever sent away empty-handed from the gates of her home.

Joel had asked her gently, after their marriage, if they should not take Rebecca's father into their home. The house was large and there were enough servants to help with his care.

Joel had not expected Rebecca's violent outburst. Eyes flashing, hands trembling, she had shouted that never, no never, would she consent to Joel's proposal. Nobody in this town seemed to know that she had a blubbing, dim-witted man for a father, and she intended to keep it that way.

Joel had been disappointed. He had not known this side of his wife's character, but he adored his beautiful young bride and he had not pressed her any further. He made sure that there was enough money to take care of the old man and he had urged Rebecca to visit her father regularly.

Rebecca had promised she would, immensely relieved. She had taken her daughter to see her grandfather a few times, but she had not taught Sarah that her grandfather might like to see her more often, and now Sarah's life was filled to the brim with the care of her two small children and she had more or less forgotten her grandfather.

"Grandmother, where are you going, the camel is waiting for you in the courtyard. May I come?" shouted little Jonathan, as he came bursting into his grandmother's room. Rebecca hugged him and kissed

his dimpled, eager little face.

"You'd better stay with your sister, I have to go away for a few days with our servant, Aaron," she explained. "What have you been doing?"

"Come grandmother, I have a surprise for you," whispered Jonathan mysteriously, as he pulled Rebecca across the courtyard to the quarters where he lived with his parents and sister.

Behind a fountain Rebecca discovered her granddaughter, who solemnly handed her a jar. "Close your eyes," ordered little Miriam while Jonathan watched with a beaming face. Carefully Rebecca lifted the lid. You never knew what to expect from those two rascals. "Open your eyes," commanded Miriam, and Rebecca started to scream. A giant bullfrog with bulging eyes leaped at her, followed by a dusty lizard.

"A boy caught the frog for us at the river; we caught the lizard ourselves," explained Jonathan as he ran to catch his disappearing pets. Rebecca noticed a washcloth and a pot with water and some of her daughter's costly perfume.

What were you two doing?" she inquired. Her grandchildren's inventiveness never ceased to amaze her and fill her with curiosity.

"We were going to give them a bath and make them smell nice, and then they were going to get married and have babies," explained Miriam impatiently. "Now they are gone." Rebecca was still chuckling when she mounted the camel and left with old Aaron. Those children made her forget the restlessness and depression she experienced lately. Sometimes she wondered what life was all



"... the senseless, brutal murder of all little boys ... The insane King Herod had heard that the Messiah had been born ..."



about. Here she was, middle-aged, a wife, mother and grandmother. She had experienced all the thrills life could offer. What was next? Getting older, perhaps a sickbed, then death. And then what? Quickly she forced herself to think of other matters.

The same old visit?

It was still quiet early in the morning, the sun was shining in a cloudless sky, birds were twittering and flowers sent their delightful fragrance in sweet waves over the countryside. Rebecca started to feel at peace with herself and briefly her heart gave praise to Yahweh. She always took Aaron along on these trips to her father. She liked the older man's gentle humour and loved him as much as she *could* have loved a father.

She told Aaron about her grandchildren's latest trick, knowing how he enjoyed the children.

"Yesterday I prevented them from setting fire to the stable," Aaron grinned. "They had made a nice little altar behind the stable from mud, stones and hay. They had put some dead flies and a few half-dead

grasshoppers on their altar, and were just going to light the fire. When I caught them and scolded them they were very indignant. Didn't I understand that they were giving thanks to God for the new baby lambs? Your father might like to see his great-grandchildren some day."

Rebecca looked startled. Was Aaron trying to tell her something? He always asked her uncle and aunt how the old man had been during their absence, and although he knew that Rebecca never showed the least amount of interest, he had never given her as much as a reproachful look.

Quickly Rebecca changed the subject.

"Look how unusually busy the roads are becoming," she remarked.

"That's because the rabbi Jesus of Nazareth is nearby," Aaron explained. "It's amazing how many people follow him and how many miracles He has performed."

"I don't know what to believe," Rebecca reflected. "I've never seen Him, although I would like to, and find out for myself if He is really as amazing as people say he is. What do you think, Aaron, have you

ever met Him?"

I have seen Him

Aaron did not reply for several moments. Then, slowly, he admitted, "Yes, I have seen and heard Him, and to me He personifies love. I believe He comes from God, as He says He does, although no prophet has ever come from Nazareth. But somebody told me He was born in Bethlehem, when His parents were visiting there to be registered. I am starting to believe He is the Promised One. The prophet Micah foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and nobody has ever done the miracles Jesus performed. Why, He has even raised people from the dead!"

Rebecca's heart started to pound, and suddenly she felt dizzy. There it was again, Bethlehem, her birthplace, little Rueben, all those murdered little boys!

"Come on, let's hurry!" she urged, suddenly agitated.

An hour later, they found it impossible to go any further. The crowds were so dense now that nobody could get through, so Rebecca left her camel and luggage in Aaron's care and climbed a steep hillside to have a better look. She might as well make the best of the situation and satisfy her curiosity about Jesus.

Finally, after much shoving and pushing, she saw Him, surrounded by the throngs, and his voice rang out loud and clear.

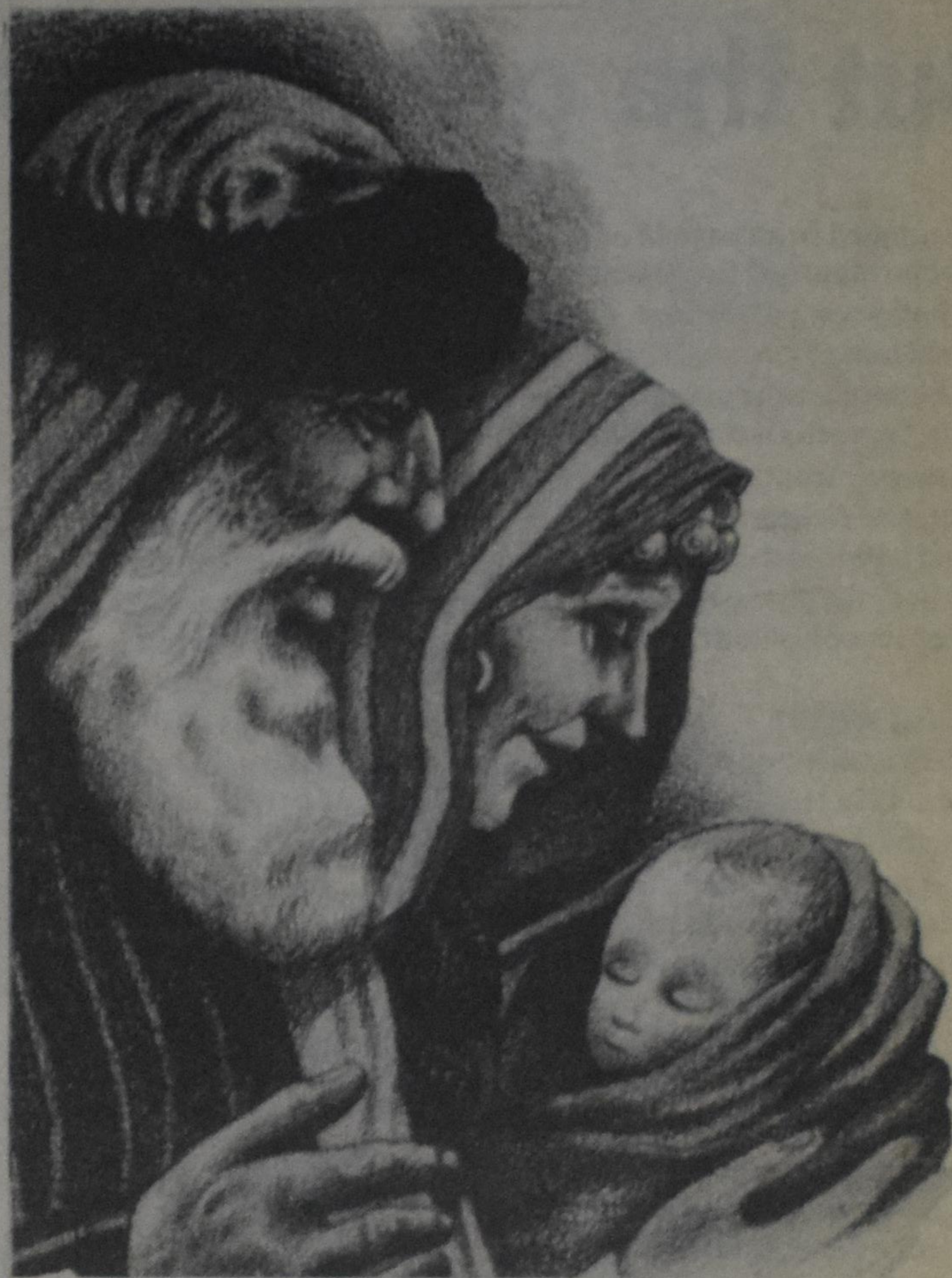
"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy," He cried.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth!"

"Meek?" thought Rebecca. "Merciful?" and suddenly her thoughts went to her old uncle and aunt who had taken care of her father all these years without complaining. Instantly she knew that her brief visits and her money amounted to nothing compared to the daily nitty-gritty task of caring for an invalid.

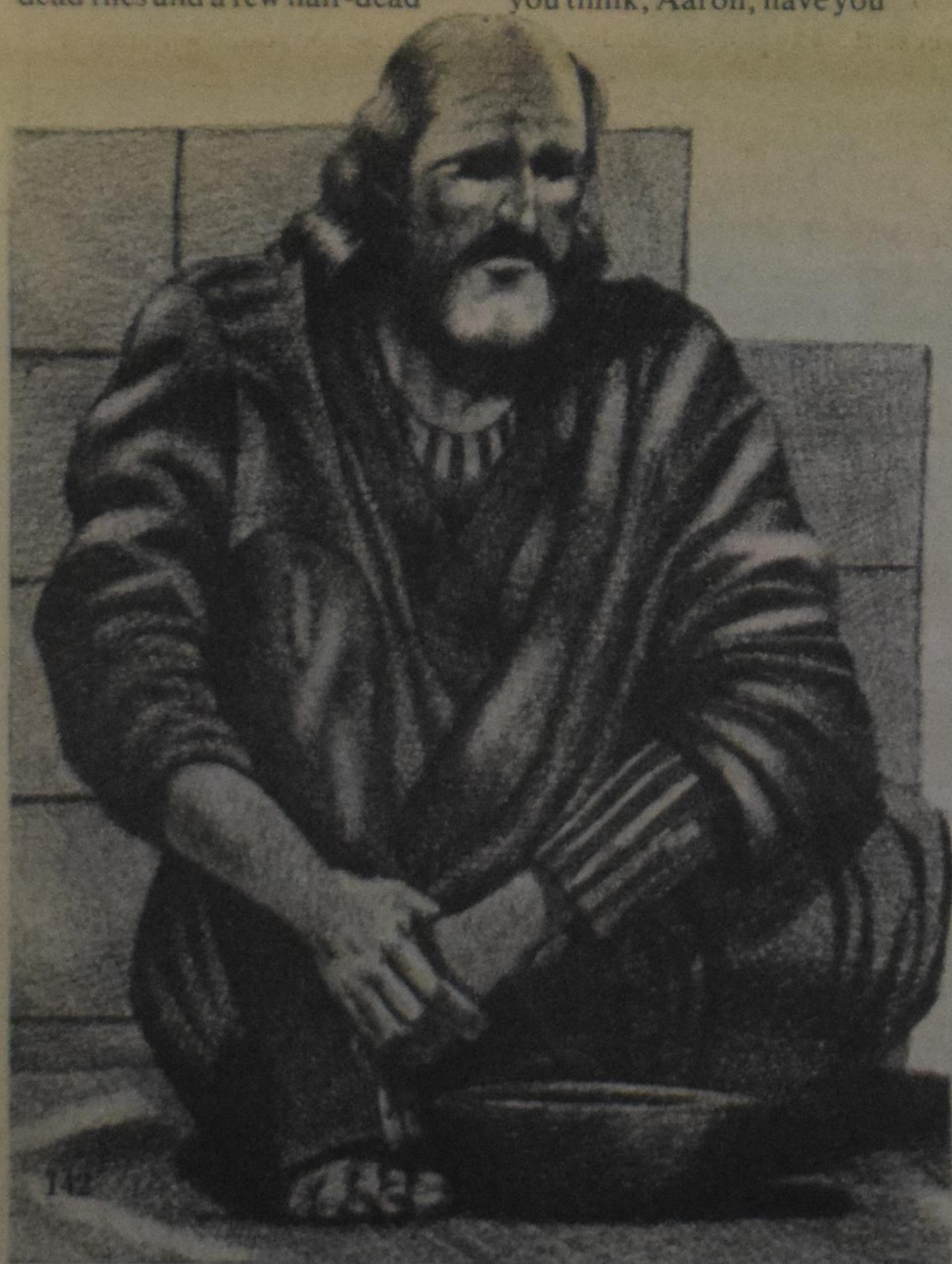
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted," said the rabbi, and briefly Rebecca met his eyes as they swept over the crowds. Was he looking at her? Her thoughts went to her father

Continued on page 14...



"True, she knew that she did not really love her kind-hearted, much older husband ... their marriage had been blessed with a dearly loved daughter, Sarah."

Illustrations from: *The Bible Illustrated for Little Children*, by Ella K. Lindvall, illustrated by Paul Turnbaugh, Moody Press, Chicago.



"... her father had mumbled over and over again. He lost the will to live and gradually withdrew into a strange world of his own."

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But the greatest is love

... continued from page 13. who had mourned for 30 years and had never put the past behind him.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," continued the rabbi, and Rebecca trembled. Could it be that the lowly, the despised, the outcasts, were indeed loved by God?

Living water

She lost all sense of time as she drank in His words. Something was happening to her. It was as if she had suddenly been allowed to look into the heart of God and discovered nothing there but a holy all-consuming love.

It made her feel unclean, evil, and she felt an overpowering yearning for wholeness and forgiveness. Sick people were carried to Jesus, and it no longer surprised Rebecca that they were healed.

Hours later Jesus stopped talking and as He started to leave, Rebecca tried to get closer to Him. It was impossible, but suddenly Jesus stopped and looked directly at her. What did she see in those eyes? Love, but also reproach? Instantly Rebecca knew that Jesus knew all about her — about her coldness towards her father, her indifference towards her faithful old uncle and aunt, about her self-righteousness and her guilt feelings. He knew about Rueben, and why the little boy had had to die.

How old was Jesus, anyway? A rabbi did not start to teach until he was 30. Her father's mumbled words came back to her, "A voice is heard in Ramah" King Herod's command, a new-born King ... Could it be ...? Could it be?

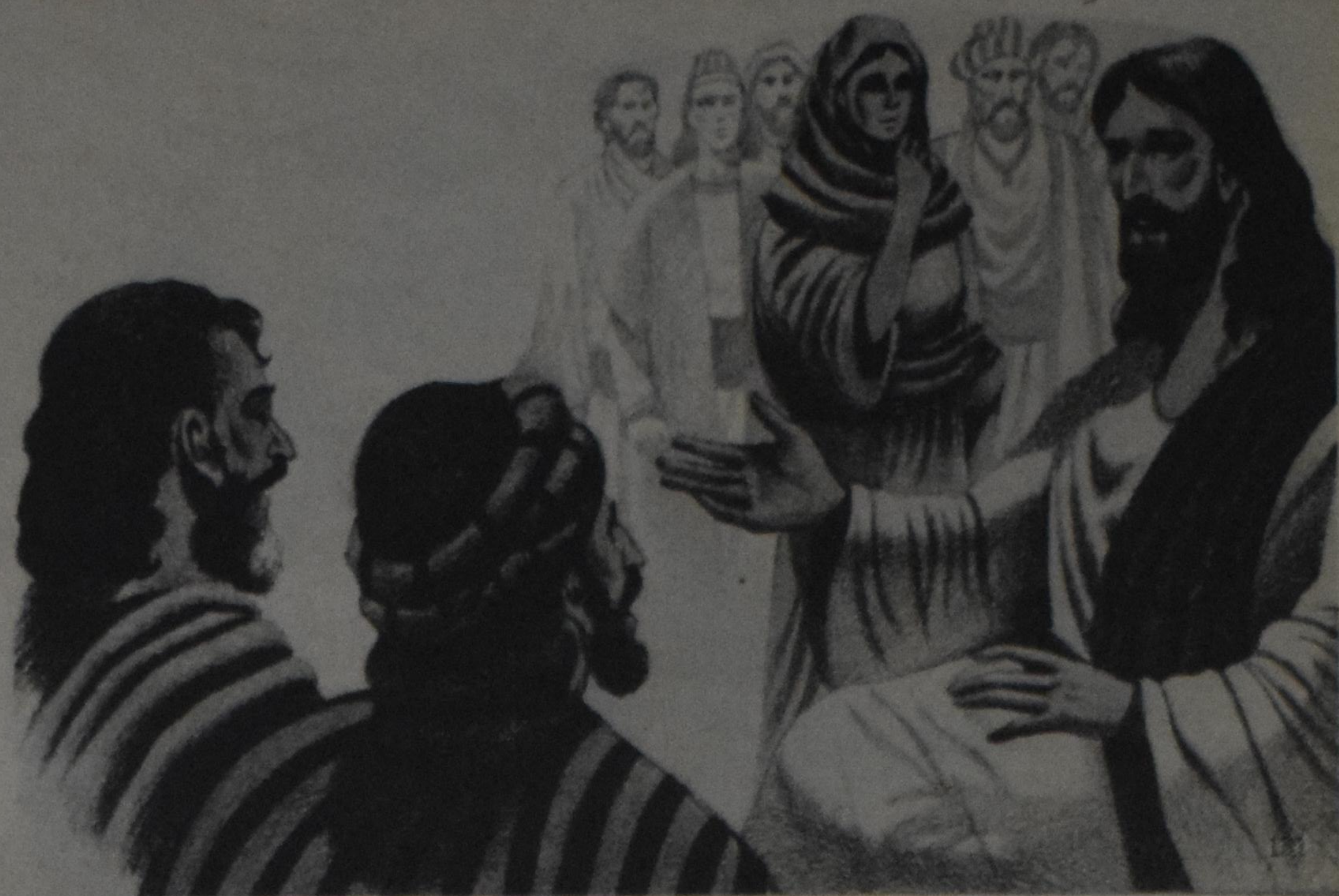
Rebecca's head was spinning. She felt naked, sinful, and yet there was the beginning of a song within her, a soft melody that promised renewal and peace and true, lasting joy.

Rebecca's eyes filled with tears as she groped her way down the hill. She was still shaking as she met Aaron. Aaron, good, old, faithful Aaron looked at his mistress and knew ... and understood, but said only, "It's too late to go to your father today, we can sleep at the inn tonight."

"The words he spoke moved me deeply," confessed Rebecca, as they enjoyed their evening meal at the inn that evening.



"I know," acknowledged Aaron. "He makes you want to change. He made me see my sins, and when I repented, He forgave me, I could feel it."



"She lost all sense of time as she drank in (Jesus') words. Something was happening to her."

Go in peace

"I know," acknowledged Aaron. "He makes you want to change. Before I met Him, I was quite pleased with myself. I obeyed the law, I tithed, but I did not know I lacked love. I once heard Jesus tell some Pharisees that they were hypocrites because they would rather give their money to God and give alms in public so they would be admired by men, than to honour their father or mother who might need them. His words were not entirely gentle, but He made me see my sins, and when I repented He forgave me, I could feel it." Again Rebecca looked startled. Was Aaron once more trying to tell her something?

After a long pause, she spoke again. "We have to try to see Jesus again, and I hope my family will meet Him as well," she vowed. Then she was quiet again. This was difficult, much more difficult than she had thought. Her father's face with the dull, grief-stricken eyes seemed to look at her.

"Aaron," she faltered. Then she looked at her servant with

determination. "Aaron," she said again. "Soon we must visit my father again, and if they are willing, I'd like to take my husband, daughter and son-in-law, and two grandchildren along. He might like to see them."

Aaron smiled. Softly he said, "If Jesus were here now, He would probably say to you, 'Go in peace, my daughter.'"

Berta Hosmar is a homemaker and free-lance writer living in Whitby, Ontario.

Christmas news

The Word that called creation into being, the arranger of verbs and actions, the materializer, pre-existent prologue to any

schematizing mind-set we might impose upon the world ... this Lord became our flesh announcing the validity and redemption of life

to humans caught in the pain of guilt and injustices and other diseases of the soul that cries for light, more light.

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Frank Sawyer

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Give a good book for Christmas

In Straw and Story: Christmas Resources for home and church by Joyce Erickson. Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, revised edition, 1983. Paper, 191 pp. \$10.95 U.S. Reviewed by Marian Van Til.

This varied book is a useful resource for any parents who want their family Advent and Christmas celebrations to be creative, and of course, Christ-centred.

The author best summarizes the book's origin and intent: "The materials are a collection of the creativity of many, including the joyful years of celebrating Christmas with my own Swedish and German grandparents. These are added

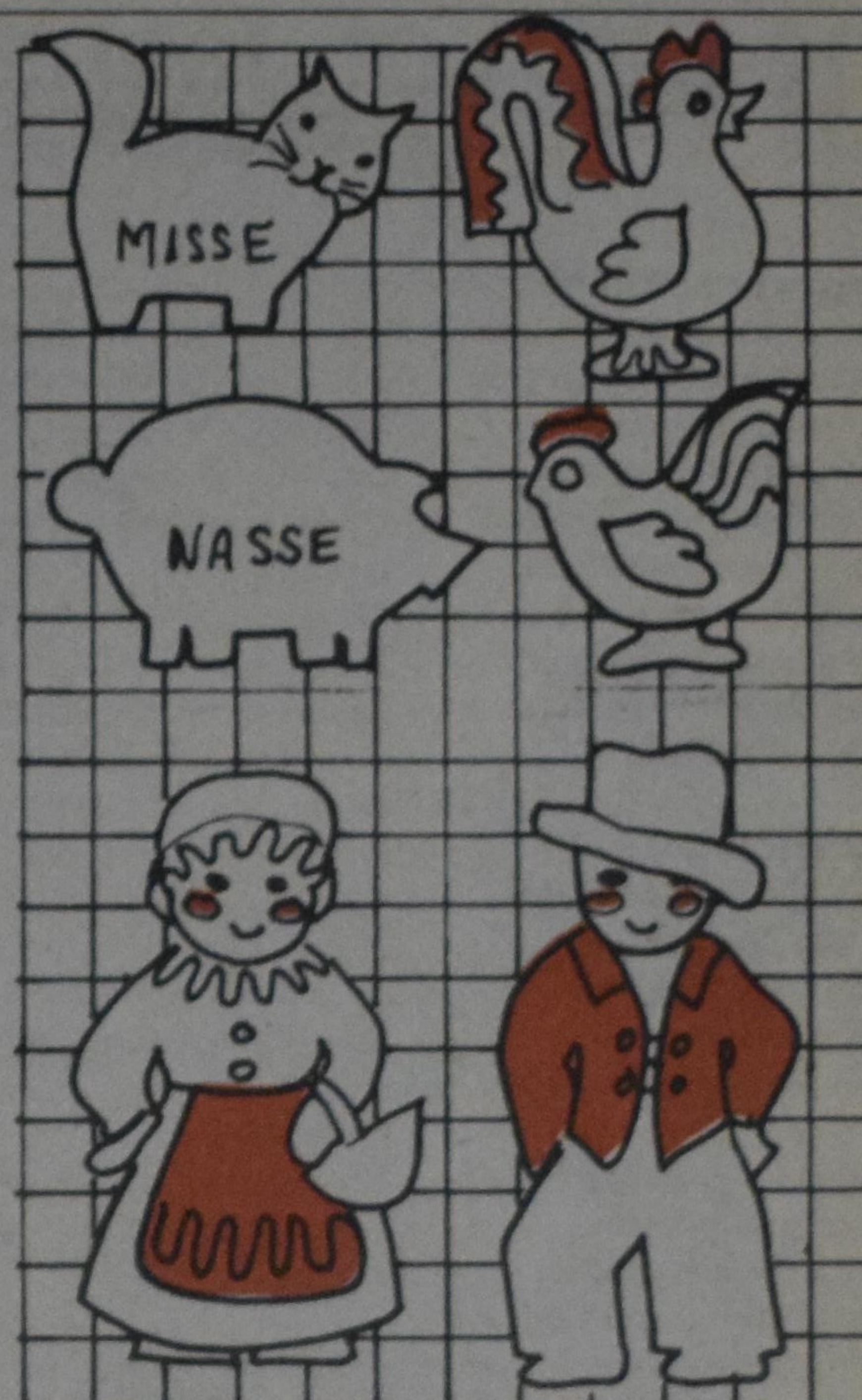
to the meaningful experiences of creating a Christ-centered Christmas in traditional and new ways for my own children."

In Straw and Story has six foci: family and church celebrations for Advent; Christmas songs; prayers, litanies and invocations; plays and cantatas; international celebrations and traditions; Christmas crafts. One of the book's values is this variety of material.

Some of the materials intended for church use could be suitable for Church School or informal Christmas programs. A few items — such as the Advent wreath suggestions — can be adapted for church or family use. The songs are

recently-composed pieces with very "immediate" texts. Some are suitable for guitar accompaniment and they are all easy for children to learn. The crafts look intriguing and some are also suitable for children to make. The recipes speak for themselves!

Reformed users of *In Straw and Story* will be aware that the book comes from a Mennonite-related tradition. (It's also oriented to Americans.) That is evident in some of the recipes, crafts, and in its "peace on earth" emphasis. There is little, however, in the prayers, stories and songs that Reformed sensibilities would want to avoid. It is a resource which has enough in it to make it useful for years to come.



Fruit soup

Cook together:

½ lb. dried prunes

½ lb. white raisins

1 lb. dried mixed fruit (pears, peaches, apples)

1 sliced lemon

2 c. sugar

2 cinnamon sticks

2 tbs. cornstarch

Put in large pan, cover with water and simmer until the fruit is done. Chill.

Serve with Christmas cookies and lots of hot coffee.

Drömmar

(Dream cookies)

1 c. butter

¾ c. sugar

2 tsp. vanilla

1 tsp. baking powder

2 c. flour

35 blanched almonds

Brown butter slightly and put into bowl. Cool. Add sugar and stir until fluffy. Add vanilla, then flour and baking powder sifted together. Work dough until smooth. Roll into 70 little balls. Place on buttered cookie sheet with half an almond on top of each. Bake at 250° F. until golden brown (about 25 minutes).

from *In Straw and Story* by Joyce Erickson. Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press, 1983.

*The Word became
flesh and dwells
among us!
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feel His presence
in the coming
Christmas season.
The C.C. staff*

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The birth of Jesus in historical context



Adoration of the Magi, 1480, Sandro Botticelli

John H. Martens

There have been many attempts to exactly "date" the birth of Christ. But absolute certainty about the year of

Jesus' birth has never been obtained, however.

We know only that the nativity did not occur in A.D. 1, the first year of our Christian

era. From Scripture we know that Christ was born before Herod the Great died (in the year 4 B.C.) During the Passover festival of that year, Archelaus was already ruling over Judea — his troops slew a great number of rebellious Jews during the festivities in Jerusalem. Herod must have died early in the same year, at any rate before the Passover season. It is obvious from Matthew 2, that Herod was in Jerusalem (see especially verse three) when the wise men from the East came looking for the king of the Jews.

The traditional date of the magi's visit is January 6. It makes eminent sense to assume that Christ was born in 5 B.C. (the year before Herod's death), and to place the Nativity in the earlier part of that year. The same might apply to the coming of the wise men and their audience with Herod.

Full control

Herod was apparently residing in his palace in Jerusalem during these two events, and it would seem that, although perhaps ill, he was

still in full control of the affairs of state. This impression is reinforced by his calling together the Jewish priests and scribes. Everything points to the King being in control of his mental faculties and in tolerable health at this time, which historians emphatically agree he was *not* during the months immediately preceding his death (which fell before the Passover of 4 B.C., early in the year). In the early months of 4 B.C. the King then can hardly have acted as is described in Matthew 2, due to his progressively deteriorating

Continued on next page ...

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(Continued from previous page) physical and mental condition. The description of his behaviour as we read it in this Bible chapter, seems in conclusion to refer to events as they happened in the preceding year (5 B.C. or even late 6 B.C.) when the King was still capable of taking things in hand, although in his own high-handed way.

No wise men at the manger

On account of all this, Jesus' birth is often placed in early 5 B.C. This would give the King time to think things over and plot his course of action after consultation with the Jewish theologians. It is important to note also, that the biblical account in Matthew tells us that when Herod ordered the Bethlehem massacre, he ordered that boys up to two years old be killed. This indicates that Jesus was probably months older than we often think when the wise men arrived to pay him homage.) Herod must have had reason to assume that he would surely hit his mark with such an order.

It is hardly possible that all these happenings — the birth of

Jesus, the arrival of the wise men in Jerusalem, the calling together of the Jewish religious leaders, the Bethlehem massacre, Herod's becoming critically ill, his removal to Jericho where he died and the gathering of the Jewish rebels, leading to the massacre by Archelaus' troops at the Passover feast of 4 B.C. — could have occurred in the course of three or four months before Easter, 4 B.C.

We don't know when in this context the Bethlehem murder of the innocents took place nor when the wise men returned to the East. Neither do we know when the flight into Egypt occurred. If Jesus was born in 5 B.C. it follows that these events likely happened within two years after Christ's birth.

We read in St. Luke 2:1, that Quirinus was governor of Syria when Caesar Augustus ordered that a general census was to be held through the empire. Historical sources tell us that Quirinus conducted a census in Palestine in A.D. 6 or 7.

Census is important

This is too late to have been the census mentioned in Luke 2. This is not to say that Jesus' parents did not travel to



A 7th century anonymous painting which hangs in Rome's Santa Maria Novella Church.

Bethlehem in connection with what the King James Bible calls "a taxing," which did fall

during Quirinus' governorship of Syria. The correctness of St. Luke's account is

acknowledged by not a few learned men. They suggest that there is evidence that Quirinus twice held the office of governor of Syria, his first "term" being at the time of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem — during that term a census was taken in about 6 B.C. or early 5 B.C.

Throughout the early centuries of Christianity, Christmas has been celebrated on different dates. There certainly was no agreement on the specific day of Christ's birth nor do we have any better knowledge of it in our day. We can only mention what earlier Christians held to be his day of birth: April 19, May 20, and November 17, and during the second century, the Nativity on January 6. Two hundred years later, Western Christianity, including the Church of Rome, commemorated the event on December 25. Since the end of the 4th century, that date has been universally adopted as the day to commemorate Christ's birth throughout both Eastern and Western Christendom.

John Martens is an historian and writer from Listowel, Ontario.

How shall this be?



Quickly God's special agent wings with wonderment to Nazareth-town and visits Mary who, interrupted in her daily chores by news so strange and scary, sees dreams of married life turn into visions of doom and asks:
How shall this be?

But Gabriel, God's special agent, well-versed in heaven's song of love, comforts the virgin-bride who, astonished by glad tidings, bows her head in worship and magnifies her Lord rejoicing in his mercy; his covenant promises of old; and she ... Believes that it shall be!

On Luke 1:26-35
Christmas 1985
William Suk



A Christmas Greeting from the Beautiful Province of Nova Scotia.



A blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our friends and relatives.

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Clarence & Tina de Groot
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B2W 4Y2



We wish you a very blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year

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Thanks

STARING: Mr. Marinus Staring of Peterborough, Ontario, would hereby like to thank all friends and relatives for the care, concern and loving sympathy expressed by them during the time of the illness and recent death of his beloved wife, Jacoba Staring.

SWYTINK: Thank you! Touched by the many best wishes and expressions of friendship, we would like to thank all those who remembered us on the occasion of our 40th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for His goodness and care in years past.
John and Jenny Swytink

Births

BARTHEL: The dawn of new life fills our hearts with joy. We, Bob and Barbara Barthel, are thankful to God for another healthy child, a daughter, KELSEY MICHELLE, a new sister for Jadan. She is also another grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. D. Schouten of Fenwick, Ontario, and Mr. and Mrs. P. Barthel of Red Deer, Alberta and another great-grandchild for Mrs. W. Vahrmeyer of St. Catharines, Ontario.
11 Burgby Ave., Brampton, ON L6X 2G7

BONVANIE: We, Hennie and Barend, thank God for the gift of another son, born November 20, 1985. He weight 9 lbs. 11 oz. (4390 gm). A brother for Gilbert, Douglas, Richard, and Elaine. Grandson for Mrs. L. Haringa, Wolvaga, Friesland, and Mrs. H. Bonvanie, Brampton.
74 Frederick St., R.R.#6, Woodstock, ON N4S 7W1

COOK: Gary and Laura (nee De Peuter) are thankful for the birth of their firstborn, a son, BENJAMIN JEFFREY, on November 25, 1985. Benjamin is the first grandchild of Harry and Frances Cook of London, Ontario, and the third grandchild of Cor and Gerry De Peuter, also of London.
Address: 447 Salisbury St., London, ON N5Y 3B3

DEGRAAF-SCHOTANUS: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." With thankfulness to God, who made all things well, Don and Chris announce the arrival of their second child, a daughter whom they named LAURA CHRISTINE. She was born on Sunday, October 13th and weighted 7 lbs. 2 oz. Her big sister, Melissa, lovingly welcomed her with open arms. Laura is the fourth grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Schotanus (Fonthill) and the 13th grandchild of Mr. and Mrs. Gerry DeGraaf (Beamsville).
Address: 3190 Butler Pl., Niagara Falls, ON L2J 3K4

Births

MARISSSEN: Harry and Ida (Saarloos) thank God for the safe arrival of their fourth child, a daughter LEANNE MICHELLE. She was born October 30, 1985, and is a new sister for Darryl, Amanda and Brian. She is the 17th grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. T. Marissen and the 18th grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Floor Saarloos.
Address: R.R.#3, St. Thomas, ON N5P 3S7

Anniversaries

Andyk 1930 Aylmer 1985
With gratitude to God, we announce that our parents,
COR and NANTJE BROER (nee De Jong)
will celebrate 55 years of marriage on December 11, 1985. We pray that they may continue to enjoy God's blessing together and with their family and friends.
Their thankful children:
Dirk & Marian Broer — Aylmer
Grada & Walter Zylstra — Dunnville
Josephine & Andy Van Dyk — Ingersoll
Edward & Thea Broer — Aylmer
Tilly & Don Stafford — Aylmer
Harry & Hilda Broer — Aylmer
Dora & Norman Haaksma — London
Also 28 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.
Home address: 110 Caverly Rd., Apt. 23, Aylmer, ON N5H 2P4

Anniversaries

1955 December 9 1985
With much joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for His goodness, we announce the 30th wedding anniversary of our parents,
WILLIAM and MARGARET COLYN (nee Knegt)
May our God continue to bless you and make you a blessing to others, as you have been to us, Mom and Dad.
Congratulations from your children:
Joe & Joanne; Justin, Christopher, Lauren — Woodstock
Margaret — Hamilton
James — Grand Rapids
Anita — Sarnia
Dorothy — Regina
Sylvia & Isaac Van Geest (fiance) — home
David — home
Jeremiah 17:7.
Address: P.O. Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0

Anniversaries

1930 December 11 1985
With thankful hearts we celebrate the 55th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents,
JOHN and WILHEMINA WEVERS (nee Van Tebberen)
May God continue to bless and keep them in His care. Congratulations and love from:
Rita & Corry Biesbroek — Lethbridge, Alta.
Alice Schenk — Lethbridge, Alta.
Willy & Gerry Wevers — Lethbridge, Alta.
Ann & John Lubbers — Calgary, Alta.
Leida & Arie Konynenbelt — Abbotsford, B.C.
Berna & John Vos — High River, Alta.
Jackie & Alan Poole — Winnipeg, Man.
Sylvia & Ben Wevers — Vancouver, B.C.
Hennie & Dick Wevers — Baden Baden, West Germany
Willy & Chuck Haines — Rocky Mountain House, Alta.
Nelly & Elroy Nieboer — Iron Springs, Alta.
Brenda & John Wevers — Fort Macleod, Alta.
Martin Wevers — Calgary, Alta.
Helen & Mike Wevers — Edmonton, Alta.
and their 54 grandchildren and 14 + ? great-grandchildren.
Open house, D.V., on December 11, 1985, at their home in Lethbridge.
516 18th St. N., Lethbridge, Alta.

Anniversaries

"This is the day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it."
December 5, 1985, will be a joyful day for,
ART MEINEMA and
WILMA MEINEMA-Noordam
as all 10 children and their spouses hope to come home to help them celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary.
Rika & Henk Mulder — Niagara-on-the Lake, Ont.
Bruin & Corrie Meinema — Delft, Nederland
Co & Ben de Bruin — De Lier, Nederland
Bert & Minnie Meinema — Kalamazoo, Mich.
Louis & Alice Meinema — Kalamazoo, Mich.
Abe & Betty Meinema — Donaldsonville, Georgia
Pete & Glenda Meinema — Jacksonville, Florida
Art & Marilyn Meinema — Kalamazoo, Mich.
Arend & Joanne Meinema — Kalamazoo, Mich.
Andy & Vicky Meinema — Kalamazoo, Mich.
Also remembered with much love by their 29 grandchildren.
Home address: 2615 N. Westnedge, Kalamazoo, MI USA 49007
On this same day,
HENK and RIKA MULDER-Meinema
hope to celebrate their 30th anniversary.
Sharing their joy are:
Harold Mulder — Trenton, Ont.
Wilma & Richard Bosgraaf — Niagara Falls, Ont.
Arthur Mulder — Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.
Home address: Lakeshore Rd., R.R.#3, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0
Broek op Langedijk Hamilton 1960 December 25 1985
Immanuel God is with us.
With thanksgiving to our God, we announce the 25th wedding anniversary of Mom and Dad,
KEES and BERTA VANDER STELT (nee Dekker)
As children we praise the Lord for His faithfulness and blessings bestowed upon you. It is our prayer that the Lord continue to bless and keep you in His care for many years to come.
With love and congratulations:
Eleanor & John Tamming
Ruth Jan
Home address: 77 Springside Dr., Hamilton, ON L9B 1M5

Don't forget to extend your Christmas greetings in C.C.

Wanted

Who can help?
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Ralph van der Woude
14490-106 A. Ave.
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Accommodation VISIT EXPO '86 Chilliwack CRC families offer bed and breakfast, and campers are welcome. Proceeds to support of our local Christian school. For directions, info. and reservations, write: Mrs. M. Brink, 41445 Yale Rd., East, R.R.#1, Sardis, BC V2R 1A9				

The Calvin College Department of Mathematics and Computer Science expects to have positions available for the 1986-87 academic year.

Applicants in Mathematics, Computer Science, and Mathematical Statistics will be considered. The Department currently has 18 full-time faculty and nearly 100 majors at the junior-senior level. Calvin College is a Christian liberal arts college, and each faculty member is expected to demonstrate a Reformed and Christian perspective in her or his teaching and other professional activities.

To apply contact **Professor T. Jager, Chairman**
Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science
Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI 49506

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Redeemer College

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Applicants for full-time positions should hold the doctorate (or its equivalent) or should be nearing the completion of the degree. Those applying should also be committed to pursuing scholarship on the basis of a biblical, reformed world view.

Letters of application along with curriculum vitae and names of references should be sent to:

Dr. James R. Payton, Jr., Academic Dean
Redeemer College

467 Beach Boulevard, Hamilton, ON L8H 6W8

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Knox Christian School in Bowmanville

invites applicants for the position of

teaching principal

We are looking for someone with leadership qualities and administrative ability.

Send application along with resume to:

Mrs. Liz Dragstra, Sec. of Ed. Com.

R.R.#5, Bowmanville, On L1C 3K6

Phone: (416) 263-2977

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Langley, BC (K-7, 215 students)

is inviting applications for the position of

PRINCIPAL

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Send resume and inquiries to:

Grace Muller, Education Committee Chairperson

c/o Langley Christian School

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Events

CALENDAR
of events

- Dec. 7

Redeemer College Advent Christmas Choral Concert at 8 p.m., Immanuel CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont.
- Dec. 7

Dutch carol sing with "The Ambassadors" in First CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont., at 8 p.m.
- Dec. 8

"A Little Advent Music", an evening of choral and instrumental works, congregational singing and organ music by the Hoekstra Family Consort, at 8:15 p.m., Trinity CRC, 99 Scott St., **St. Catharines**, Ont.
- Dec. 8

Handel's "Messiah" by The Laudate Dominum Choir of Chatham; at 8 p.m., St. Andrew's United Church, **Chatham**, Ont. Free-will offering, everyone welcome! Organist: Dick De Jonge.
- Dec. 11

Christmas Concert, 8:00 p.m. in the Trinity United Church, **Bowmanville**, Ont., by the choirs and orchestra of the Ontario Christian Music Assembly under the direction of Leendert Kooij with Andre Knevel at the organ. Admission \$4.00 for adults, and \$2.00 for students.
- Dec. 13

Concert by the choir "Euphonia" with Pam Van Weelden (piano) and Grace and Colleen Reinders; 7:30 p.m., Clarkson CRC, 1880 Lakeshore Rd., W., **Mississauga**, Ont. For info. call (416) 823-7262.
- Dec. 13 & 14

Handel's "Messiah" performed by Listowel Concert Singers and The Kitchener/Waterloo Symphony Orchestra. Conductor: Paul Sloan; at 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday at Trinity United Church, **Listowel**, Ont. For info. phone (519) 291-3106.
- Dec. 14

Christmas Concert by Mountainview Singers directed by Harold de Haan at 8 p.m. in Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby**, Ont. Cantata: "The Nativity of Christ" (Caleb Simper).
- Dec. 14

Choir and Organ Concert by the choir and brass directed by Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ; at 8:15 p.m. in Central Presb. Church, Charlton St., **Hamilton**, Ont.
- Dec. 15

Christmas Concert by St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo," St. Thomas Ladies' Choir "Gloria In Excelsis" and the London Bel Canto Choir, in the Bethel CRC, **London**, at 8:00 p.m.
- Dec. 15

Advent Service with the Adoramus Maranatha Choir at 7 p.m., Calvin CRC, **Dundas**, Ont.
- Dec. 20

Christmas Candlelight Service with the Adoramus Maranatha Choir at 8 p.m., Mount Hamilton CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont.
- Dec. 21

Christmas Candlelight service with "The Ambassadors" in First CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont. at 8 p.m.
- Dec. 21

Christmas Concert at 8:00 p.m. in Willowdale United Church, Kenneth Ave. (behind the Northtown plaza) **Willowdale**, Ont., by the choirs and orchestra of the Ontario Christian Music Assembly, under the direction of Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ. Admission \$4.00 for adults, and \$2.00 for students.
- Dec. 21

Christmas Candle Light Service at 8 p.m. in the First CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont.
- Dec. 22

Christmas Candlelight Service with the Adoramus Maranatha Choir at 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **York**, Ont.
- Dec. 22

Christmas Concert by Brampton Christian Choral Society; Director W. Hoekstra; 8 p.m., Second CRC, **Brampton**, Ont.
- Dec. 22

Christmas Concert by St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo," St. Thomas Ladies' Choir "Gloria in Excelsis" and the London Bel Canto Choir in the First United Church, St. George St., **St. Thomas**, Ont., at 8:00 p.m.
- Dec. 23

Christmas Organ and Choir Concert with Belcanto Choir and Andre Knevel at the organ; starts 7:30 p.m. at Immanuel Ref. Church, 266 High St., **London**, Ont.
- Dec. 24

Annual Christmas Eve concert by "New Life" Choir at 7:30 p.m. in Maranatha CRC, **St. Catharines**, Ont.
- Dec. 29

"Let Us Now Rejoice", Christiaan Teeuwsen in concert with "The Ambassadors" at St. Thomas Anglican Church, 99 Ontario St., **St. Catharines**, Ont. at 8 p.m.
- Dec. 29

"Frysk Krystfeest" Lieten, ynstrumintale en vocale numers. Skriftlezing en mienskiplik sjongen yn de Fryske Tael. Troch de Hoekstra Family Consort at 8:15 p.m., Trinity CRC, 99 Scott St., **St. Catharines**, Ont.
- Dec. 31

Organ Concert and Hymn Sing with Andre Knevel at the organ; at 7:30 p.m., Guelph Reformed Church, 79 Speedvale, **Guelph**, Ont.
- Jan. 11

Organ Concert by Andre Knevel, 8 p.m., at Christ Church Cathedral, James St., **Hamilton**, Ont.

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Mrs. Pamela VanWeelden — piano
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Let's Play Chess P. Layer

#1072
Game Position

#1073
I. Kies & L. Molnar,
Holland, 1938

11

7

12
3 points
White to play and mate

9
2 mover 2 pts.

Notes
1. Although White's pieces are situated better than Black's there does not seem to be an immediate win for White. If you do find the surprise, jot it down, send it in and be on your way to a book prize (only 87 more points needed).
2. Black's two Knights, in #1073, do all the work in developing the author's theme. They do not get rewarded for Black is checkmated each time they move. Please give the key and threat, if any.
3. The deadline to send in solutions will be given with the second series of problems in December.

Kerstfeest

O eeuwige-vreemde, eeuwige-zaal'ge overtocht!
O onbetaalbre prijs, waarmee ik ben gekocht!
Gods eengeboren Zoon werd uit een maagd geboren.
God heeft Zijn volk bezocht! God heeft Zijn volk bezocht!

O liefde, die omvat Gods luisterrijk heelel,
Ontluisterd en ontwricht door mijn vervloekte val.
Gods eengeboren Zoon daalt naar de diepste diepten.
Mens werd Hij in een stal! mens werd Hij in een stal!

O wonder van gena, dat niet zijn weerga vindt!
Gepeupel van de straat, het wordt door God bemind.
Ze stromen door de deur van d'open stal naar binnen.
God heeft ook mij bemind! God heeft ook mij bemind!

Heft nu de lofzang aan, het grote gloria,
Zingt in der eeuwigheid van eeuwige gena.
Gods eengeboren Zoon staat midden in de wereld.
Looft God, Halleluja! looft God, Halleluja!

Louis Praamsma (1910-1984)

Devotional guides

What to give the teenager who doesn't need more clothes

Intermission: Breaking away with God by James C. Schaap. Grand Rapids, Mich.: CRC Publications, 1985. Paper, 221 pp., \$9.75. Can. Reviewed by Marian Van Til.

Intermission is aptly named. It's a devotional guide designed to encourage teenagers to pause — and read the Bible. And it works.

Selected passages from Genesis to Revelation guide young readers through major biblical themes. Schaap has a succinct, up-to-date, and witty way of elaborating on those themes. He relates the Scriptures to readers' school life, friendships, family relationships, sports, and numerous other topics about which teenagers think, worry and dream.

The book works equally well for personal or family devotions. (Parents will delight in Schaap's captivating style as much as their children will.)

Intermission would make not only a pleasant gift, but an important one as well.

Do young people actually appreciate such stuff? If my 15-year-old nephew (and his 12-year-old brother — and even eight-year-old sister) is typical, they do. I gave him a copy for his birthday and it's being used and enjoyed at the family's meal-time devotions.

No doubt someone you know may have the same experience with this practical, biblical guide for young Christians.

Advertising Deadlines			
Dated	Mailed	Display	Classifieds
Fri. Dec. 13	Tues. Dec. 10	Thurs. Dec. 5-8:30a. m.	Wed. Dec. 4-8:30a. m.
Fri. Dec. 20	Tues. Dec. 17	Thurs. Dec. 12-8:30a. m.	Wed. Dec. 11-8:30a. m.





Kerst op Terschelling

Herman de Jong

Als de rest van de mensheid hun avonden verknoeien voor teevees, zitten er studenten van McMaster's University in afgetimmerde basement-kamertjes, waar je niet eens recht op in kunt lopen, tot midden in de nacht en soms ver daarna te studeren. De kamertjes worden vaak door twee studenten bewoond, om geld uit te sparen. Onopgemaakte bedden, hopen vuil wasgoed op de vloer, en buros gemaakt van tweedehands deuren en sinaasappelkistjes, nemen zoveel ruimte in beslag dat je er haast niet kunt lopen ...

In zo'n kamertje zit James de Beer op Physics 301 te blokken. Nuclear Physicist wil hij worden. Moeder al bang. "Zul je goed voor jezelf zorgen, jongen, al die 'radiation' is zo gevaarlijk!" Vader trots. Tussen duim en wijsvinger weg laat hij zijn medewerkers op de G.M. fabriek weten, dat zoon James vast een beroemde vent zal worden ... nuclear physicist, zijn zoon!

Maar wat weet vader de Beer eigenlijk van z'n zoon af? Wat weet hij van Physics 301 waarmee zoonlief deze avond zit te worstelen? Wat weet hij van de angst die er in zijn zoon leeft om weer een examen te verknoeien? Uit geld-en tijdnood doet James dit semester zes vakken inplaats van de gebruikelijke vier. Weet James dat hij op het randje van een fikse overspanning loopt? De studentendominee met z'n baard en smakelijk Hollands accent weet dat wel je krijgt



Gevels van huizen op Terschelling

ervaring in zulke dingen.

Ofschoon James al maanden de 'campus' kerk negeert, laat deze dominee de jongeman niet los. Regelmatig bezoekt hij de onbehouden student, die met zijn armen en benen geen raad weet in het overvolle kamertje. De dominee heeft naar de schoppenhanden gekeken. Handen die trillen! De dominee ziet een oververmoeid, pokdalig gezicht. Ogen waarachter tranen branden. De zenuwtrek rondom het linkeroog ...

De ervaren dominee weet meer. Deze James voelt zich door iedereen verlaten en het meest van God. Hij schimpt op het benarde kerkleven van zijn ouders ... Zijn Christelijke medestudenten laten hem links liggen ... wat doe je met een jong dat altijd maar kritiseert? De dominee weet ook dat deze jongen een meisje nodig heeft. James vertelde de baardman dat meisjes sinds zijn vroegste jaren altijd met een grote boog om hem heen liepen

De stoel zonder spijlen

kraakt. De formules in het Physicsboek rijen zich aan. Er is verband tussen deze formules. Ze vormen een lange keten die uiteindelijk uitloopt op een verrassende oplossing. James zit naar die keten te staren en zijn vermoeide geest vermag niet om verbanden te leggen. De stoel kraakt, en een hand als een schop dreunt op het veneer van de tweedehandse tafel. De hand blijft steken in het splinterend gat ...

Boven houden de twee oude verhuurders hun hart vast. Ze mogen James graag. Maar de laatste tijd doet hij zulke rare dingen. Luister nu toch ... hij gaat weer muziek spelen. Knoerhard! De oude Poolse staal-arbeider wil al met zijn stok op de vloer stampen. "Laat hem nu maar," zegt het vrouwtje met de eeuwige bonte hoofddoek, "misschien is muziek goed voor hem"

Boem-boem-boem-boem. Beethoven's Vijfde. De dood klopt aan! De dood klopt aan en dan sleurt een dringende melodie de ziel van deze jongen voorbij de sterren, naar het zwarte gat tussen de galaxies waar zieke zielen hun hel binnen wervelen. Nog eens boem-boem-boem-boem en dan horen de oudjes een woord dat geen vloek is maar vloek wordt als het wordt herhaald en herhaald.

Nog luider wordt de muziek — hij weet toch dat we thuis zijn, denkt het vrouwtje — en dan, vlak onder hen, een dreun tegen de vloer, — ach, nu stoot hij zijn hoofd ook nog — en dan een vloek, zo godslasterlijk, zo erg, dat ze beiden een kruis slaan ...

Het vrouwtje moeizaam naar beneden. Daar zit hij. Hoekige schouders die schokken. Een lieve grote jongen die zijn verdiet van onvermogen en verlatenheid wegsnikt als een klein kind ... de ogen die te ver uit elkaar staan zien haar aan, en ze zag ogen zoals deze een lange tijd geleden ... in een Pools concentratie kamp. En dan doet het vrouwtje iets wat moederhanden en meisjes-handen lang geleden hadden moeten doen. Ze strijkt de jongen over het borstelige haar dat nooit wil 'zitten.' En James hoort haar zeggen: You boy, you study no longer go for trip to old country ... that help me and that will help you.

Als ze vertrokken is, loopt James bukkend naar de boekenkast. Religion, religion, religion, Goudzwaard, van Riessen, Runner. Tussen Spier en Bolt een foto album. In dat album een oud verweerd kiekje. Daar staat hij, twaalfjarige jongen, met Japke. Japke van het eiland.

Zal hij? Maar James, that's the easy way out!

Weglopen van je studie? Zijn hele emigranten-werk-ethiek verzet zich er tegen. Hij kijkt naar het gat in de tafel. Er zit een fikse splinter in z'n hand. Hij peutert er aan ...

Waar krijgt hij het geld vandaan? Z'n O.S.A.P. lening is er net door. Maar dat is voor je studie, jongen!! Hij hoort het vader zeggen

Twee dagen voor Kerst staat hij toch op Schiphol.

De studentendominee moest er nog wel aan te pas komen.

Vervolg op pagina 22 ...

Open huis voor de koning

Tini Van Ameyde

Feijenoord ... Als u deze naam hoort, denkt u natuurlijk op slag aan Holland's wereldberoemde voetbalclub en aan het Feijenoord stadion! Of misschien, wanneer u in Nederland met de scheepvaart te maken had, aan de haast even beroemde scheepswerf Wilton - Feijenoord. Al deze namen hebben dezelfde oorsprong: ze stammen uit een historisch gedeelte van Rotterdam, dat Feijenoord heet. Het is centraal gelegen aan de linker Maasoever, waar de spoorbruggen en de nieuwe Willemsbrug de drukbevaren rivier kruisen. We zullen het ditmaal echter niet hebben over die voetbalclub, maar over de gereformeerde kerk van Rotterdam-Feijenoord. Een kerk, die vreedende avonturen beleefde en inderdaad, zoals het clublied zegt, "nooit verloren gaat."

Tot het eind van 1984 was de kerk van Feijenoord te vinden op het Noordereiland, tussen de Maasbruggen. En toen ik er een paar jaar geleden een dienst bijwoonde, leek het gebouw zo'n beetje op instorten te staan. Een groezelige, met graffiti volgekalkte voorgevel, vervelozende deuren, dichtgespijkerde ramen, muren met oude kogelgaten, een lekkend dak en torens, die al lang verdwenen waren onder de slopershamer. Het was niet te geloven, dat er in zo'n ruïne nog elke zondag dienst gehouden werd! Menige gast-predikant stond daar achter z'n

oor te krabbelen, overtuigd dat hij naar het verkeerde adres gestuurd was. Als hij dan toch schoorvoetend naar binnen stapte, werd hij verwelkomd door een kleine maar springlevende gemeente. Luidjes, die gezellig bij elkaar gekropen waren in het voorste gedeelte van de kerk. Niet alleen om samen te zingen en te luisteren, maar om droog te blijven. Het enige, wat daar aan vroegere glorie herinnerde, was het mooie pijporgel. Ja, de toekomst van deze hulpbehoevende gemeente leek verre van rooskleurig! Goedbeschouwd was het een

wonder, dat ze nog bestond.

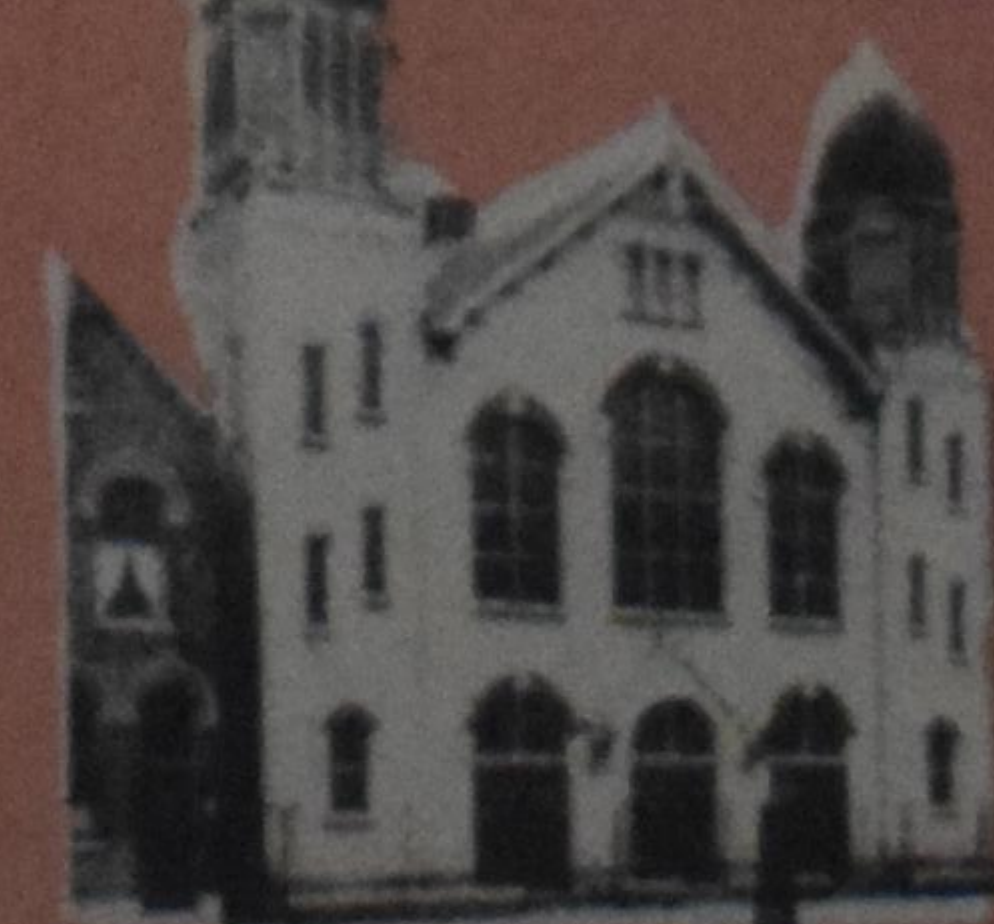
Hoe kwam een kerk, die in haar bloeitijd 1800 leden telde, in zo'n grimmige situatie terecht? Gedeeltelijk om dezelfde reden, dat nu zovele kerken in de binnenstad in moeilijkheden zitten: een exodus van leden naar de buitenwijken en naburige dorpen. Mensen, die "een huisje met een tuintje" wilden. In het geval van Feijenoord kwam er echter veel meer bij te pas. Een fascinerend verhaal van opgaan, blinken, en bijna verzinken.

Verschillende uit-tochten

Het was rond 1900, dat men daar plannen ging maken voor het bouwen van een gereformeerde kerk. Er was toen een toevloed van mensen uit de provincies, -voor-namelijk Noord Brabant, waar grote werkloosheid heerste — die op de scheepswerf Feijenoord kwamen werken. Diensten werden gehouden in een school of pakhuis, onder het wakend oog van de kerk van



De nieuwe "Koningkerk"



De oude gereformeerde kerk van Rotterdam-Feijenoord.

Rotterdam-Centrum. Tot eindelijk, op Nieuwjaarsdag 1908, de gemeente zelfstandig werd en haar fraai gebouw op de Westkant van het Noordereiland in gebruik kon nemen.

Jaren van grote bloei en activiteit volgden. De kerk groeide gestadig, omdat er volop werk in de omgeving was. Maar dat veranderde drastisch in de crisis-tijd ... In

Vervolg op pagina 22 ...



Kerst op Terschelling

... vervolg van pagina 21.

Vader en moeder schrokken:
Pinerest ... Pinerest zegt U?
Dan maar naar Holland ...

James kan zich het vliegveld
vaag herinneren. Het is tien
jaar geleden dat het hele gezin
de Beer een vakantie in
Nederland doorbracht Tien
jaar geleden dat hij Japke voor
het laatst zag!

James was toen twaalf ... een
eenzame jongen. De meisjes in
zijn klas praten achter zijn rug
... such an ugly boy, and so
strange. De jongens in zijn klas
laten hem links liggen ...
voetballen kan hij niet, hij leest
boeken op het schoolplein of
speelt schaak met een ander
stuk geleerdheid uit een lagere
klas. Soms komt een stel
meisjes hun schaakspel
verstoren. Ze wippen de
stukken van het veld. De lelijke
jongen kijkt verwonderd:
waarom doen ze dat? Geduldig
beginnen ze opnieuw. De
meester stelt de klas voor dat
James hen het schaken zal
leren. Oh no, not him!

Als James hoort dat ze naar
Holland gaan voor een
vacantiereis, is hij de enige van
de kinderen die zich verwoed
op de Nederlandse taal gooit.
Vader geeft hem de boekjes van
Terschelling en is voor het eerst
iets meer toeschietelijk. James,
het buitenbeentje in het gezin!
Al de andere kinderen zijn leuke
aantrekkelijke kinderen ...

Geneert de moeder zich een
beetje voor dat vreemde
driehoekige gezicht, de ver uit
elkaar staande ogen, de

flaporen, de slungelgang? Ach,
echt geen kind om nou es lekker
te vertroetelen zo af en toe ...

Eindelijk is het zo ver. Als ze
op Terschelling aankomen met
de Terschellingerland, de
veerboot van Doeksen, vindt
James het eiland nog mooier
dan vader hem vertelde. Ze
logeren bij oom Siebren op de
boerderij. Achter de boerderij
de Waddenzee dijk.

"Tjonge, tjonge," zegt tante
Trijn tegen moeder, "wat
hebben jullie een mooi gezin.
Maar waar is James? Die heb ik
nog nauwelijks gezien." Oom
Siebren wijst naar de dijk. "Al
een echte eilander, geen rust in
't gat."

James heeft zich nimmer zo
gelukkig gevoeld. Zo mooi ...
zo mooi! Op de kruin van de
dijk zit hij. Hij kijkt uit over
West Terschelling. Vannacht
zal hij de lichtbanen van de
vuurtoren Brandaris in zijn
slaapkamertje kunnen zien, zei
oom Siebren.

Aan de voet van de dijk, over
de zware bazaltkeien, komt een
meisje aangelopen. Jammer,
denkt James, hier zijn ook al
weer meiden Het meisje
zwaait naar hem. In Canada
zou James haar genegeerd
hebben, hier zwaait hij terug.
Langzaam klimt het meisje
naar boven. Ze is
bruinverbrand en heeft mooi
blond haar. Zal hij nu
weglopen? Geen meisjes aan
z'n lijf deze vakantie. Het moet
mooi blijven!

"Ik ben Japke, en jij bent een
Canadees die logeert bij onze
buren." Er is geen spot, geen
leedvermaak in haar stem. Hij



De veerboot van Doeksen.

probeert langs haar heen te
zien, maar wordt getrokken
door een paar ernstige ogen.
"Kun jij niet praten,
Canadees? Hoe heet je?"
Lacht ze hem nu uit? "Ik heten
James," zegt hij verlegen.
Japke proest het uit. Zie je wel,
denkt James, en meteen staat
hij op. "Niet kwaad worden,"
zegt Japke vlug, "als ik lach,
lach ik om wat je zegt en niet
om jou, gekkerd! Ik heet
James, had je moeten zeggen.
Heten is voor wij."

Japke gaat naast hem zitten.
"Wat betekenen gekkerd,"
vraagt hij wantrouwend. "Dat
betekend dat jij een erg lieve
jongen bent." Intuïtief voelt
Japke dat ze hem het
gekscherende van het woord
niet uit kan leggen.

Daar op de dijk krijgt James
z'n eerste taalles van Japke. En
daarna zijn de twee
onafscheidelijk. Met Japke
zwerft hij door de duinen. Met
Japke zit hij in een oude Duitse

bunker onder een duin. Dat is
haar geheim plekje. Door het
schietgat kijken ze uit over de
branding van de Noordzee.
Daar eten ze hun sandwiches,
meegegeven door een zorgende
tante Trijn. En daar gebeurt
iets dat James nooit vergeet.
Japke zegt: "Jij hebt vriendelijke
ogen, James," en strijkt hem dan
over zijn haar dat nog nat is van
het zwemmen. Waarom schreit
hij nou, denkt Japke, jongens
huilen toch niet?

De dag voor Kerst huilt ook.
Het Centraal station in
Amsterdam ligt in een winter-
mist gedoken.

"Ga Kerst maar op
Terschelling vieren," had
vader gezegd. In de trein naar
Harlingen, vanwaar de
veerboot vertrekt, hoort James
het weer. De opzweepende
melodie van Beethoven's vijfde
symphonie. Weer jaagt het
bloed naar zijn hoofd en

draaien zijn gedachten als
klappende molenwieken.
Hoezeer hij zich ook
voorhoudt: James, je bent vrij,
vrij van de 'ratrace' van
examens en lectures en
eindeloos studeren van een
materie waarvan je het diepste
wezen niet begrijpt. Dat is het
ergste ... hij begrijpt het niet!
Physics niet, God niet, het
leven niet! Hij begrijpt de
tomeloze drang niet die elke
jongeman ondervindt. De
dromen, de dromen waarin
zich soms een Japke bevindt,
maar altijd een
vrouwengestalte. Tartende
meisjesgezichten ... ze hebben
de levensstukken van zijn kaart
geveegd.

Hij staart wezenloos uit het
raam waartegen de regen
zwiept Physics ... de
studentendominiee; hoe kunt u
dit rotleven rijmen met de
liefde van God? ... Mrs.
Dobrowolski; een zachte hand
die over zijn haar strijkt ...

Open huis voor de koning

... vervolg van pagina 21.

1932 werd de werf Feijenoord
afgebroken, nadat de fusie met
Wilton tot stand kwam. De
scheepswerf verhuisde naar
Schiedam en de eerste uittocht
van leden begon. In 1938 was
het aantal al gedaald tot 1200.

Toen kwam Wereldoorlog
No. 2 ... Op 10 mei 1940 werden
Rotterdam-Zuid en het eiland
door Duitse troepen bezet,
terwijl het stads-centrum aan
de rechter Maasoever nog in
Nederlandse handen was. De
Mariniers verdedigden de
bruggen met leeuwenmoed,
zodat de Duitse opmars daar
tot staan gebracht werd. Vier
dagen lang lag het
Noordereiland in de vuurlinie.
Evenals vele huizen en
kantoren, werd ook de
gereformeerde kerk zwaar
beschadigd. Wat haar redding
van een wisse ondergang was
het feit, dat er een R.K. kerk
recht tegenover haar stond.

"Onze lieve Vrouwe van
Lourdes" ving de eerste
klappen op en werd bijna totaal
in puin geschoten. (Nu weet u
waar die kogelgaten vandaan
kwamen!) Ook de christelijke

school op de oostpunt van het
eiland werd totaal verwoest.

Na de capitulatie en het
redeloze Luftwaffe
bombardement, dat
Rotterdam "een stad zonder
hart" maakte, trokken de
mensen bij honderden weg uit
Feijenoord. Het was daar
tijdens de oorlog gevaarlijk
wonen. De bruggen en het
havengebied waren van militair
belang en derhalve vaak het
mikpunt van geallieerde
luchtaanvallen. Men kreeg er
genoeg van om in de
schuilkelder te zitten. Het
verlies aan leden was zeer groot
voor de gereformeerde kerk:
bij de bevrijding telde ze er
450.

**Maar wat erger was dan
materieële schade en het verlies
van zoveel meelevende
gezinnen, was de geestelijke
schade die deze gemeente moest
lijden door een scheuring.**

In de laatste oorlogswinter,
terwijl haar kerkeraadsleden
flauw lagen van de honger,
werd er avondenlang in
onverwarmde zalen vergaderd
over de kwestie-Schilder.
Feijenoord's predikant, Ds. L.

Doekes, (de latere hoogleraar
in Kampen) maakte zich het
volgende jaar vrij met 150
leden. Toen bleven er slechts
300 over ... De bitterheid was
intens. Deze scheuring ging
dwars door families en
jarenlange vriendschappen.
Mensen, die van kindsaf naast
elkaar in de kerkbank hadden
gezeten, spraken niet meer
tegen elkaar. Het was overal in
Holland vrede en vreugde,
behalve in de gereformeerde
kerken.

Feijenoord was nu een
gemeente geworden, die
zichzelf financieel niet meer
kon redden, laat staan, dat ze
erover kon denken om het
kerkgebouw te restaureren.
Wat ook niet mee hielp was het
feit, dat de sociale structuur
van het district omstreeks 1960
begon te veranderen. Er
kwamen steeds meer
buitenlandse werknemers
wonen met hun gezinnen.
Mensen, die een heel andere
levensstijl hadden dan de
vroegere buurtbewoners.
Vreemdelingen, die voor de
kerk praktisch onbereikbaar
waren, omdat ze zich zonder

verwijl bij een moskee
aansloten. Hele Rotterdamse
wijken veranderden zo van
karakter en het was, helaas,
niet altijd een verbetering.

Stads problemen

Ik herinner me wat een schok
het was, toen ik Feijenoord
terug zag in de zomer van 1976.
Het mooie park met de
kastanjebomen, dat altijd het
hart van het Noordereiland
gevormd had, was een kale
vlakte geworden met
zandbakken en schommels
voor de Turkse kleuters. De
keurige middenstandshuizen,
die ik nog in gedachten had,
compleet met glimmend koper
en kanten gordijntjes, stonden
er armetierig bij.

Over de brug lopend naar de
linker Maasoever zag ik, dat
daar een reusachtige operatie
aan de gang was: de R.K. kerk
van de H.H. Martelaren van
Gorcum werd opgeblazen. De
statige toren, die altijd als een
wachter Zions aan het einde
van de Maasbruggen had
gestaan, sneuvelde in wolken
van stof en puin. Een paar
blokken verder ontdekte ik, dat

de N.H. Wilhelmina kerk —
waar Feike Asma zoveel van
zijn befaamde orgelconcerten
had gegeven — reeds eerder
was gesloopt. Was het niet om
tranen te vergieten?

Die bouwvallige kerk op het
eiland was de enige in
Feijenoord, die nog dienst
deed! Het was toen, dat ik me
begon te realiseren hoe ernstig
de problemen zijn waarmee een
stadskerk in onze tijd te
kampen heeft ... en hoe groot
de verleiding is om er dan maar
het bijltje bij neer te leggen.

Wel, zoals u weet hebben we
de laatste vijftien jaar nieuws
uit de Gereformeerde Kerken
gehoord, dat weinig goeds
spelde. Een deel ervan kon met
recht "onrustbarend"
genoemd worden. Wat
sommigen onder ons tot het
punt gebracht heeft, dat ze van
hun broeders en zusters overzee
helemaal niets meer
verwachten.

**Het doet me daarom
genoegen om nu eens blij
nieuws uit Nederland met u te
delen. Nieuws, dat een
inspiratie is voor alle kerken,
die zichzelf te klein of te arm**



Vader; weggegooid geld, jongen, die reis moeder; een vlugge kus Japke: is ze op het eiland? Ik ben doodop, weet hij, doodmoe van het denken

Als de "Terschellingerland" langs de Pollendam vaart, staat hij als enige passagier op het dek. De vrolijke zomer-touristen veerboot is nu een miezige boot geworden. Buiten de dam begint ze hard te slingeren; de ijsskoude wind zet aan tot stormkracht. Boemboemboemboem zwaar bonkt de steven tegen de zwarte golven. De boot trilt, James trilt. De handen die zich om de witte railing persen trillen. Misschien zal dit schip zich vastdraaien in het zand naast de vaargeul. De golven zullen het als een bordpapier spelen goedbootje stuk slaan. Boemboemboemboem! ... Het radeloze denken zal ophouden en net voordat hij de laatste luchtballen naar boven blaast zal hij nog eens een blij zomer-eiland zien en een roodbruin verbrand meisjesgezicht Japke! Zullen ze met elkaar

kunnen praten zoals toen? Japke ... de enige mens die hem ooit begreep! Plotseling weet hij secuur dat hij Japke niet op het eiland zal zien. Hij ziet de schuimende golven onder de railing. Nu is hij leeg, leeg, leeg ... ik ben al dood van binnen, denkt hij. Niemand zal me missen want ik heb nooit iets voor iemand betekend. Domme jongens worden geen nuclear physicists ...

Hoe werkt de HERE God? Er laveert een man over het dek met een dampende kop koffie. De tweede stuur werd door zijn kapitein naar het kombuisje gestuurd. En de tweede stuur ziet een jongen met z'n voet op de laagste stang van de railing. "Joh, ga naar binnen, je vriest dood hier."

Grijp nu de kans door God U gegeven, James! Hij keert zich om. De stuur ziet een verwrongen gezicht. Tjonge, die knaap zal toch niet De stuurman trekt met z'n lege hand de jongen aan de mouw. Maar James verzet zich. "I'm O.K. I'm quite used to such weather in Canada."

"Nou, dan mot je het zelf maar wete," schreeuwt de stuurman boven de storm uit.

Als hij de kapitein aflost krijgt hij de wind van voren. "Sakkerdejeu, wat heb je met mijn koffie uitgevoerd, er zit niets meer in de kop." De stuurman, kijkt door het zijraam van de stuurhut. De jongen is verdwenen! "Grijp het wiel, kapitein, vlug!" De stuur rent naar de passagiers kajuit. Even later is hij terug. "Wat had je nou op je heupe," zegt de kapitein korzelig. "Oh, een akkefietje ... wist je dat we een Canadees aan boord hebben? Wacht es effe, hoe heette die knaap die zo'n 25 jaar geleden vertrok naar Canada?" De kapitein zegt: "Dat was mijn beste vriend, Simon de Beer. Bedoel je ... is het een kerel van mijn leeftijd?" "Nee, een jonge knul." "Misschien zijn zoon," zegt de kapitein terwijl hij z'n kraag opzet. "Nou ajuu, hou het kreng in de geul!"

Kapiteins zijn mannen van gezag. Als hij voor James staat klinkt z'n vraag haast als een bevel. Zo van: "De waarheid,

of ik mieter je overboord."

"You are a son of Simon van Jacob van Kees van Doeke?" James kijkt verrast op. Vader had gezegd: als je nou een Terschellinger ontmoet, zeg je maar dat je Jacob van Simon van Jacob van Kees van Doeke bent, dan opent de hele Terschellinger wereld zich voor je. "Yes," zegt James, "dat ben ik." Kapiteins snuiten hun emoties weg in hun witte zakdoeken. Hij kan er niet over uit ... een zoon van zijn beste vriend Simon!

Nu klettert de hagel tegen de patrijspoorten. De kapitein vertelt van vroeger. Dan gaat er toch een deurtje open in het brein van de jongen. Het deurtje van interesse. Het beeld van een andere vader schuift voor het beeld van de stugge G.M. fabrieksvoorman, die na het geraas van de machines alleen geïnteresseerd is in z'n biertje bij de teevee. Nu hoort hij dat vader het ook lang niet gemakkelijk had als een jonge vent. Graag willen leren, maar er was geen geld voor een school op de vastewal. Afgekeurd voor de Zeevaartschool ... weg toekomst!

Dan schiet hij bijna met z'n hoofd tegen de pet van de kapitein. Een geweldige schok, en de boot ligt stil. "Zijn we er al?" vraagt James. "Ben je betoeterd zware vloek we zitten vast in het zand naast de geul." De kapitein rent naar boven

Ze komen niet los. De kapitein besluit op de vloed te wachten. James herinnert zich iets. "Het schip zal niet kapotslaan?" vraagt hij zachtjes. "Don't say stupid things," antwoordt de kapitein.



Japke Roos ... kleuterjuf.

We zijn voor Kerstdag op Terschelling hoor

Kerstmorgen. Nog zit de "Terschellingerland" muurvast. De passagiers worden door de sleepboot "Holland" naar het eiland vervoerd. Ze zijn het wachten beu. Als de sleepboot aanlegt, ziet James oom Siebren op de kade ijsberen. Die zal de pest in hebben, denkt James. Maar oom begroet hem hartelijk. "Ben blij dat je er bent, jongen, ... kom, we gaan meteen door naar de kerk, naar de Kerst kinderdienst. Wist je dat Japke Roos kleuterjuf is aan de Christelijke school? Die gaat het Kerstverhaal vertellen ... hé jôh, kalm aan, we hoeven niet naar de kerk te rennen hoor."

De kerk is afgeladen vol. Alle stoelen zijn al bezet. Oom Siebren en James staan onder de galerij tussen andere mannen die hun plaatsen afstonden aan de eiland-kinderen. De dominee bidt ... een kinderkoor zingt ... dan een lang kerstspel waaraan de hele Zondagschooljeugd meedoet ...

James wordt ongeduldig. Hij heeft Japke nog niet ontdekt. Oom Siebren fluistert in het oor van z'n buurman: "Da's Jacob van Simon van

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Het strand bij paal 8.

vinden om iets op touw te zetten.

In een tijd, dat er in Holland's grote steden overal kerken gesloten worden wegens gebrek aan belangstelling, heeft de gemeente van Rotterdam-Feijenoord het voor elkaar gebracht om een prachtig nieuw kerk-centrum te bouwen op korte afstand van het oude. Toen dit feestelijk (en onder grote belangstelling) in gebruik genomen werd, ontving het de naam "Koningskerk." Niet zozeer, omdat het aan de Koningshaven is gelegen. Maar om eer te geven aan de Koning der Kerk, die vier jaren van samenwerking en onvermoeide toewijding zo boven verwachting gezegend had.

Een bijzondere kerk

De Koningskerk is — kent u uw vaderlandse geschiedenis nog? — een "schuilkerk." Je kunt voorbij rijden zonder in de gaten te hebben, dat daar een kerk staat. Het voorste gedeelte, bestaande uit kerkeraadskamer, koffiezaal, clublokalen, keukens, etc.,

vormt de beneden-verdieping van een zes etages-hoog flatgebouw. De eigenlijke kerk ligt daarachter, uitgebouwd in de open lucht. Het centrum is smaakvol en zeer praktisch ingericht. Dit mede met het oog op de opvang van jongeren en gebruik door derden, zoals recepties. Het aantrekkelijke kerk-interieur is verrassend licht door de plaatsing van de ramen. Toen mijn man en ik er 1.1. April rondgeleid werden, kwamen we beiden diep onder de indruk van wat daar tot stand gebracht was. Inderdaad, voor hen die trachten de wil van onze hemelse Vader te doen, gebeuren er nog steeds wonderen!

Als u nu denkt, dat Feijenoord wel een bijzondere kerk moet zijn, hebt u gelijk. Er staan daar opnieuw gastpredikers achter hun oor te krabbelen, maar om een andere reden: ze vinden de hele zaak fantastisch. En dat is het ook, temeer als je bedenkt, dat de bouw van de Koningskerk ruim Fl. 720.000.- gekost heeft. Een som, waarbij de grondprijs niet

is inbegrepen.

Vanzelfsprekend heeft men eerst de goedkopere mogelijkheden bestudeerd. Maar fusie met een andere gemeente werd beslist niet wenselijk geacht, omdat er al een paar gereformeerde kerken gesloten waren aan beide zijden van de Maas. Er zou dan in het centrum een niemandsland ontstaan. Restauratie van het oude gebouw was geschat op minimaal Fl. 350.000.-. Maar daar dit ook nog waterschade had opgelopen in de watersnoodramp van 1953, wist niemand wat er dan allemaal aan het licht zou komen.

Zo werd in 1980, na rijp beraad, het besluit genomen om te gaan bouwen. Een moedig besluit. Want waar zo'n groep het geld vandaan moest halen ... nee, dat wist toen ook niemand!

Rotterdam-Feijenoord is echter altijd al een "bijzondere" kerk geweest: standvastig in tegenspoed en met een welverdiende reputatie van gastvrijheid. Vreemden vonden daar een open deur,

speciaal de varende bevolking van Nederland. Haar contacten met binnenschippers gaan terug tot vóór de oorlog.

Als gevolg hiervan stond evangelisatie reeds op Feijenoord's agenda, toen de meeste gereformeerde kerken nog dachten dat het werk voor Johannes de Heer was. Omringd door de binnenhavens en hun concentraties van schippers — die daar vaak twee of drie weken stil liggen — ontwikkelde ze zich in de loop der jaren tot een z.g. schipperskerk. De enige in Rotterdam, die ouderlingen aanstelde met de speciale opdracht om deze mensen aan boord te bezoeken.

Van de 340 leden, die Feijenoord vandaag telt, resideert slechts de helft aan de wal. De andere helft bestaat uit schippers, die met hun gezinnen aan boord wonen en "naar boven" (de Rijn op) varen, naar het Roergebied, naar Antwerpen, enz. Mensen, die een zwervend bestaan leiden en met vreugde de kerkdienst bijwonen, als ze op zondag in Rotterdam liggen. Hier is,

vermoed ik, de reden waarom deze stadskerk zo resoluut geweigerd heeft om het bijltje er bij neer te leggen: een diep gevoel van verantwoordelijkheid voor de mensen, die God in haar omgeving plaatste. Voor deze gemeente en haar kerkeraad was het eenvoudig ondenkbaar, dat ze zouden ophouden een veilige haven te zijn.

Wonderlijke dingen

Toen eenmaal het besluit tot bouwen was genomen, gebeurden er merkwaardige dingen. Zo verklaarde de stad Rotterdam zich bereid om het terrein van de oude kerk te ruilen voor grond aan de Koningshaven, waardoor het nieuwe centrum aan het vaarwater zou komen te staan. De Maatschappij voor Volkswoningen ging akkoord met het plan om een complex van 24 flats te bouwen in samenwerking met de kerk van Feijenoord. Een plan, dat de kerk een kwart miljoen in bouwkosten bespaarde! De Stichting Rotterdam bood een

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Kerst op Terschelling

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Jacob van Kees van Doeke ... helemaal uit Canada!" "Nou, nou," zegt het mannetje.

Het Kerstverhaal. James ziet een jonge vrouw het podium opgaan. Nee, dat is Japke niet. Dat is niet het meisje zoals hij haar steeds in zijn gedachten heeft. Dan begint de jonge vrouw zacht te praten en er trekt een wonderlijke ontroering door hem heen ... het is Japke wel! Ingespannen begint hij te luisteren

"Toen waren er herders in het veld die op hun schapen pasten. Jullie zijn wel eens langs de "Groene Weiden" gefietst, tussen de duinen achter ons dorp? Nou, zo moet je dat je maar voorstellen. Daar liggen de herders te dommelen tussen hun schapen. De Brandaris zwiekt zijn lichtbundels rond en plotseling blijven die bundels stil staan, en een straal omvat de herders. Maar het licht dat de herders zagen was veel feller dan het licht van de Brandaris. Zo fel, dat ze de handen voor hun ogen hielden. Wat is dat nou, dachten de herders"

Een kinderkerk is een kerk met schuifelende voetjes. Maar toen Japke van de geboorte in de stal vertelde, was het doodstil in de oude kerk. Ze

zagen het gebeuren ... in één van de bunkers door de Duitsers achter gelaten in de duinen, nu ondergestoven door het witte zand.

"Toen ik een jong meisje was ontdekte ik zo'n bunker onder het duinzand. Toen had ik een geheim holletje waar ik in kon dromen, terwijl ik uitkeek over de Noordzee. Ik ging altijd helemaal alleen naar mijn geheim holletje. Niemand wist dat het er was. Maar één zomer ... één zomer kreeg ik een vriendje ... nee hoor, ik weet wat jullie denken, maar toen was ik nog maar een klein meisje ... dat vriendje kwam uit een ver land. Ik kon gezellig met hem praten. Ook over Jezus, hoor. Want als je dit kindje, dat veel later in zijn leven voor ons ging sterven aan het kruis, erg liefhebt, dan praat je er toch over? Nou dat vreemde jongetje nam ik eens mee naar mijn geheim holletje. Daar zaten we dan ... en we gingen een spel spelen. Ik zei: "Ik ben Maria en jij bent Josef en we zijn net als zij doodmoe van het lopen door het duin"

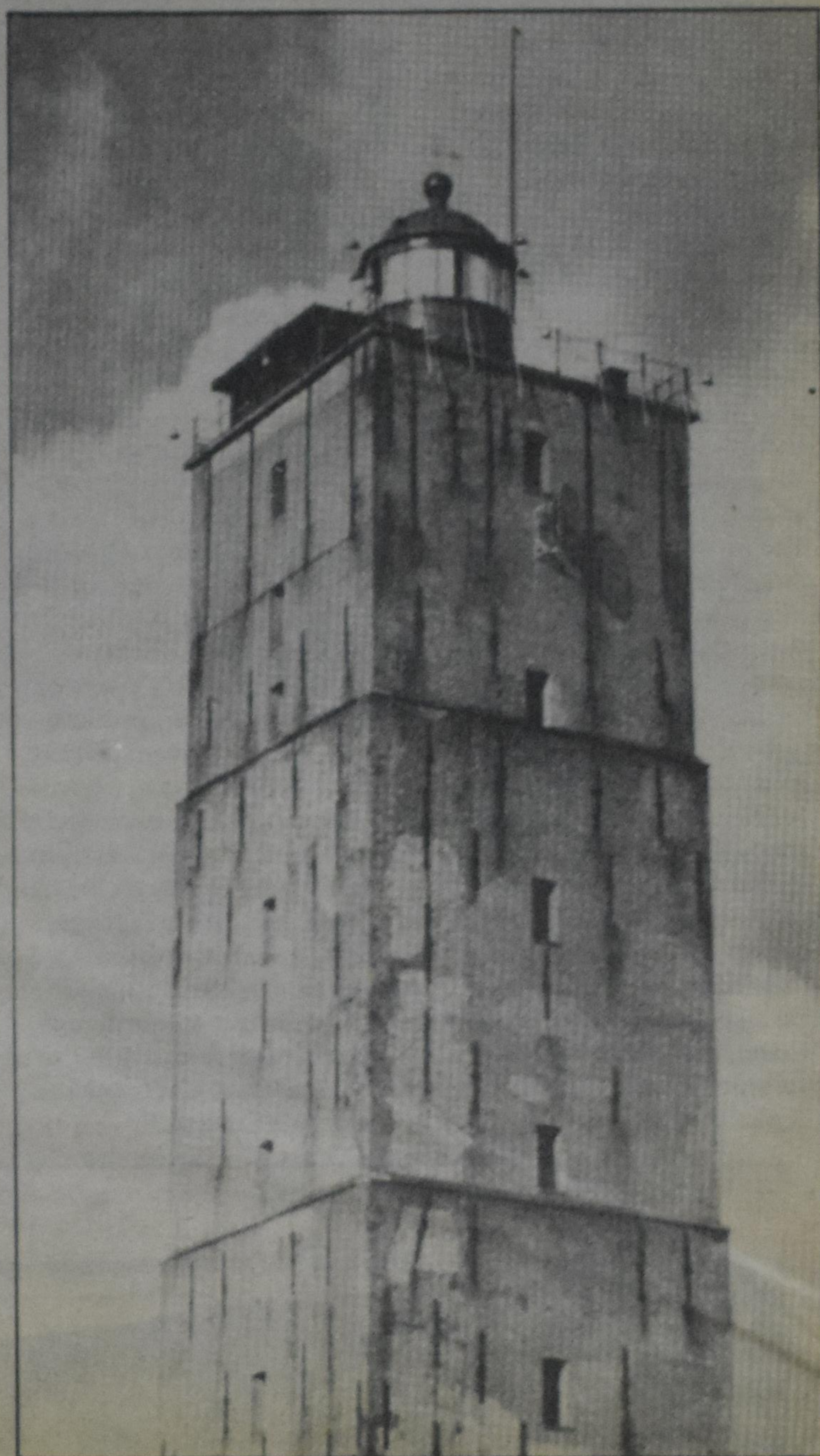
De kinderen hangen aan Japkes lippen. Hier wordt nog eens het Kind geboren. En James? James wordt ook weer kind. Een kind dat op heel

eenvoudige wijze gelooft in Het Kind. Wanhoop wordt hoop en hoop wordt zekerheid: dit rijke, dit rijke ... het is voor mij O Jezus, waarom raakte ik U kwijt?

Kinderen verdringen zich om Japke. Dat was mooi, juf! Dan raakt de kerk leeg, ouders en kinderen verspreiden zich door het stille West Terschelling. Japke blijft alleen achter ... overal liggen de blauwe "Sunkist" papiertjes. Waarom gaat die lange jongen onder de galerij nou niet naar buiten? Wat een vreemde jekker heeft hij aan. Hij lijkt wel een monnik met die kap over zijn hoofd. Heden, nu komt hij ook nog naar haar toe ...

"Ik heten James!" "Heten is voor wij..." Even later lopen ze, hand in hand, door de schemer, en een lichtbundel van de "Brandaris" draagt hen op tot de Heer

Herman de Jong is Development Director voor Salem Christian Mental Health Association. Hij woont in Jordan Station, Ontario.



De "Brandaris," West-Terschelling

Open huis voor de koning

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renteloze lening aan van Fl. 50.000. - en de kerk van Rotterdam-Centrum, die geld beschikbaar had door de verkoop van een gebouw, droeg Fl. 100.000. - bij tegen een symbolische rente. De kleine gemeente van Feijenoord overtrof toen zichzelf door met laaiend enthousiasme en hard werk Fl. 45.000. - bijeen te brengen voor het bouwfonds.

Natuurlijk was de kerkeraad, waarin reeds jaren mannen en vrouwen samenwerken, zeer bemoedigd door al dit meeleven. Besloten werd om op zoek te gaan naar een paar sponsor-kerken. Onder het motto "Ora et labora" werden 850 (!) gereformeerde kerken aangeschreven. Twee werden bereid gevonden om Feijenoord te adopteren, n.l. de kerken van Rijnsburg en Barendrecht. Een derde sponsor, de kerk van Leiderdorp, had Feijenoord al sinds 1978 financieel gesteund. Door het organiseren van bazaars en andere activiteiten hebben deze sponsors de vorstelijke som van Fl. 132.000. - bij elkaar gebracht ten bate van de Koningskerk. Als teken van haar grote dankbaarheid voor de liefde van deze broeders en zusters werd in het nieuwe

kerkportaal een gedenksteen ingemetseld met de namen van Barendrecht, Leiderdorp en Rijnsburg.

En nu de klap op de vuurpijl: toen het centrum zijn voltooiing naderde, bleek er maar Fl. 47.000. - tekort te zijn in het bouwfonds! Een schuld, die de penningmeester in de eerstvolgende drie jaar zal afbetalen. Hij heeft er echter een voorwaarde bij gesteld: dat er in die tijd geen predikant beroepen wordt. Daar slechts de helft van haar leden een vaste bijdrage betaalt, is de kerk van Feijenoord nog steeds zo arm, ziet u, dat ze zelfs geen emeritus predikant kan vragen om part-time in de gemeente te werken. Dit is de consequentie van haar weloverwogen keus voor het bouwen van een nieuw kerkgebouw. Maar ik denk dat geen mens in de war hoeft te zitten over gebrek aan pastorale zorg daar. De leden, die aan de wal wonen, kennen elkaar allemaal en worden bijgestaan door een toegewijde kerkeraad. En de varende leden vallen onder de zorg van twee schippers-predikanten, die in het Rotterdamse havengebied werken. Dit is waarom hun vaste bijdragen niet naar Feijenoord gaan, maar naar de deputaten voor de kerkelijke arbeid in de binnenvaart.

De enorme krachtsinspanning voor de

bouw van de Koningskerk heeft de onderlinge band in de kleine gemeente nog versterkt. Zelfs gezinnen, die vroeger aan de kant bleven staan, droegen enthousiast hun portie bij.

Terwijl de schippers en hun vrouwen probeerden om bij elk belangrijk moment aanwezig te zijn. Leden en oud-leden van over heel Nederland reisden naar Feijenoord om de laatste dienst in de oude kerk bij te wonen en God te prijzen bij de inwijding van de nieuwe!

Op hoop van zegen

De bouw van de Koningskerk luidt ook een nieuwe periode in: er is goede hoop, dat de gemeente in de nabije toekomst gaat groeien door een toevloed van gereformeerde gezinnen. Het terrein van het Vrij Entrepot achter de kerk wordt bewoonbaar gemaakt voor één- en tweepersoons huishoudens. De hoge muur rond het Entrepot verdwijnt dan, waardoor de nu nog verscholen kerk met haar achtergevel aan een straat komt te staan. Bovendien heeft de stad Rotterdam plannen voor de bouw van 3500 woningen vlakbij, in de omgeving van twee binnenhavens. Wanneer dit alles doorgaat, komt de Koningskerk in het hart van een gloednieuwe wijk te staan. Wat een gelegenheid voor

evangelisatie, aan de wal en op het water!

Intussen is de kerk al aan het groeien. Het laatste nieuws, dat ik ontving, was wel zeer verheugend: een echtpaar, dat al jaren niet meer gekerkt had, deed belijdenis en liet twee zonen dopen. Elke zondag in de Koningskerk wordt beschreven als een feestdag. Niet alleen om de boodschap van het evangelie, maar ook om de opkomst en het hartelijk meeleven van de gemeente. Vrijwel iedereen blijft na de dienst koffie drinken om gasten te ontmoeten. Schippers komen van alle windstreken naar de kerk. Bij slecht weer worden ze zelfs van boord gehaald en weer thuis gebracht. Wie transport nodig heeft hoeft maar even te bellen. Er is een kindernevendienst en een crèche voor de kleintjes.

De kerk van Feijenoord is weer, als vroeger, een voorbeeld van gastvrijheid. Met één verschil: ze kan het haar gasten nu aanzienlijk gezelliger maken! Zelfs een pijporgel ontbreekt niet meer. Toen het geliefde orgel uit de oude kerk te groot bleek voor de nieuwe, kon het geruild worden voor dat van de gereformeerde kerk in Oosterhout. Dit zorgvuldig gerestaureerde pijporgel werd op 15 juni j.l. in gebruik genomen met een feestelijke

muziek- en zangavond, die de Koningskerk tot de nok toe bezet zag.

"Alles wat adem heeft love de Here, zinge de lof van Isrel's God! Zolang ik hier in het licht mag verkeren, roem ik Zijn liefde en prijs mijn lot."

Wel, ingeval u het nog niet geraden had: Rotterdam-Feijenoord is de kerk waarin mijn man en ik opgegroeid zijn. Tot 1950 woonde ik op het Noordereiland. Vergeef me dus, dat ik een beetje trots ben op mijn dappere broeders en zusters. Ze deden in geloof wat velen eerst zagen als onbegonnen werk. Mijn innige wens is dat ze, temidden van een toenemende wanhoop en verwildering, blijde getuigen zullen blijven van het Woord dat voor ons mens werd. Moge de Koningskerk altijd wezen wat ze beloofde bij de inwijding: een plek "om op reis thuis te zijn." Een licht aan het vaarwater. Een open huis voor de Koning!

Tini Van Amerje heeft jarenlang haar bijdragen naar Calvinist Contact gestuurd. Wij zijn blij om weer eens iets van haar te horen. Ze woont met haar man in Edmonton, Alberta.